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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**AWAKENING TIGER: INDIA'S QUEST FOR EXPANDED
INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD**

by

Robin J. Walker

March 2008

Co-Advisors:

Jeffrey W. Knopf
Peter R. Lavoy

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**AWAKENING TIGER: INDIA'S QUEST FOR EXPANDED INFLUENCE IN
THE WORLD**

Robin J. Walker
Civilian, Department of National Security Affairs
B.A., Oberlin College, 2004

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES (SOUTH ASIA)

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
March 2008**

Author: Robin J. Walker

Approved by: Jeffrey W. Knopf
Co-Advisor

Peter R. Lavoy
Co-Advisor

Harold Trinkunas
Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines India as a rising Asian and world power, and asks whether that rise will be successful and compatible with U.S. interests. It explores the history of Indian foreign policy as it was transformed from the inward-looking non-aligned movement through the end of the Cold War, economic liberalization, the development of nuclear weapons, improved relations with the West, and an outward focus based on increasing India's power. The three case studies examine the tools India is using to expand its influence in three key regions: soft power in Southeast Asia, hard power including military bases in Central Asia, and diplomatic efforts with the Middle East, especially Iran.

The main argument is that India's foreign policy is primarily based on its interests in any given situation, in compliance with classic realist theory. The United States should not assume India will be a reliable ally, as India will continue to act based on its own interests. India is on the rise toward becoming a great power, and has or is developing all the tools for achieving that status. However, Indian policymakers have not yet developed a comprehensive grand strategy to allow India to truly achieve its potential.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION: A NEW GREAT POWER?	1
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
B.	LITERATURE REVIEW	4
1.	Major Approaches to the Issue.....	6
C.	METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION.....	9
D.	CONCLUSION	10
II.	WHENCE A MAJOR POWER? INDIA'S GROWING GLOBAL ACTIVISM	13
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	13
B.	HISTORY OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY	14
1.	Indian Sphere of Influence.....	15
2.	India's Independence.....	16
3.	Indian Internal Politics.....	18
4.	The End of the Cold War	19
5.	The Rao Government's Reforms.....	20
6.	Nuclear Weapons and Indian Foreign Policy.....	21
C.	INDIAN TOOLS FOR POWER PROJECTION	23
D.	CONCLUSION	27
III.	HOLDING THEIR END UP: INDIAN SOFT POWER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.....	29
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	29
B.	THEORIES OF SOFT POWER	31
C.	INDIAN SOFT POWER	37
D.	INDIAN SOFT POWER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA	43
E.	CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF INDIAN SOFT POWER	47
IV.	PREVENTING A NEW GREAT GAME: INDIAN AND U.S. INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA	49
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	49
B.	NATURAL FEATURES OF CENTRAL ASIA.....	50
C.	INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA	53
1.	India's History with Central Asia	53
2.	India's Central Asian Interests and Policies	56
D.	U.S. INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA	60
E.	CONCLUSION	62
V.	NUCLEAR HIJINKS: INDIA, IRAN, THE UNITED STATES, AND NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS	65
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	65
B.	INDIA'S INTERESTS IN IRAN	67
1.	Historical Relationship and a Mutual Enemy	67
2.	Quest for Energy and the IPI Pipeline.....	69

C.	U.S. INTERESTS IN IRAN	71
D.	THE U.S.-INDIA CIVILIAN NUCLEAR DEAL	74
1.	The India Lobby.....	75
2.	India and the IAEA Board of Governors' Iran Votes.....	77
E.	CONCLUSION	78
VI.	CONCLUSION: WORKING WITH A NEW POWER: A MIXED CONCEPT	79
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	79
B.	INDIA'S REALIST TRADITION.....	80
C.	INDIA'S GREAT POWER AMBITIONS.....	82
D.	CASE STUDIES: INDIA'S STRATEGIES FOR EXPANDED INFLUENCE.....	84
E.	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	87
1.	Recommendations for U.S. Policymakers.....	87
2.	Recommendations for Indian Policymakers	88
F.	CONCLUSION	90
	LIST OF REFERENCES	91
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	105

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Map of Overlap of Perceived Indian and Chinese Historic Spheres of Influence [From Garver, <i>Protracted Contest</i>].	16
Figure 2.	Map of Southwest Asia [From MyTravelGuide.com].....	52
Figure 3.	Proposed IPI Pipeline Route [From Calamur “Analysis: IPI Faces Dangers, Hurdles”]	70

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I. INTRODUCTION: A NEW GREAT POWER?

We have proclaimed this past year that we will not attach ourselves to any particular group. That has nothing to do with neutrality or passivity or anything else.... We are not going to join a war if we can help it, and we are going to join the side which is to our interest when the time comes to make the choices. There the matter ends.

-Jawaharlal Nehru, December 4, 1947

A. INTRODUCTION

The people of the Indian subcontinent historically have viewed their sphere of influence as stretching far beyond the subcontinent itself, but since the founding of the Indian and Pakistani states in 1947 India has had little ability to project power beyond its own borders. It is only in the last several years that India has begun using the traditional tools of statecraft to become more influential both in the surrounding regions and the world at large. India sees itself as a great power in the region and aspires to be a great power in the world.

India has the world's second largest population and one of the world's fastest-growing economies with a booming high-tech sector, and it is the world's largest democracy, and is one of the newest declared nuclear weapons powers. In 2005 the United States agreed to a major nuclear technology and energy deal with India (now held up in the Indian Parliament), symbolizing the growing relationship between the two countries. India's importance is growing for the United States—both for economic reasons and for India to possibly serve as a strategic counterbalance to China and Iran—as well as for many other developed states that covet Indian labor and markets, and countries that frequently look to India for leadership on trade negotiations and international agreements. Most American policymakers assume that even as India increases and exercises its power, Indian interests will generally be supportive of, or at least compatible with and not in opposition to U.S. interests, but this may not be the case. As India's power increases, its interests may not always align with those of the United

States, leading to potential disagreements, tensions, or even possible conflicts. Understanding the strength and direction of India's growing power can help U.S. policymakers in the diplomatic, intelligence, and military communities make better future decisions vis-à-vis India.

India's foreign policy has changed over the past 60 years in response to both internal and external factors. Likewise, India's current foreign policy is driven by the desire to maintain or increase security. The current main drivers of India's foreign policy are its large and growing population and the need to continue growing the economy in order to keep up with the population, the need for natural resources—especially energy to keep the economy going, and potential regional or global security threats. All three factors push India towards expanding its influence into other countries and regions.

As India expands and modernizes its economy one key element it needs is a secure source of energy. India is very poor, and it imports over 65 percent of its oil.¹ Although the civilian nuclear deal with the United States—if and when it passes—is likely to help alleviate some energy needs by enabling India to build more nuclear power plants, India's energy needs are still growing at more than four percent a year, making obtaining energy supplies a foreign policy imperative.²

India also finds itself in a region still rife with threats and has fought past wars with both China and Pakistan. Engagement with those countries, including the ongoing dialogue with Pakistan over Kashmir, may help stabilize some of those potential conflicts. One prominent scholar noted that,

The discussions have produced a few tangible accomplishments, including a cease-fire along the Line of Control, the establishment of a new bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad (the capitals of Indian-controlled Kashmir and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, respectively), and

¹ Vibhute Hate. "India's Energy Dilemma," Center for Strategic and International Studies *South Asia Monitor* No. 98 (September 7, 2006), www.csis.org/media.csis/pubs/sam98.pdf (accessed June 3, 2007).

² Lisa Curtis. "India's Expanding Role in Asia: Adapting to Rising Power Status," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* No. 2008 (February 20, 2007), http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/upload/bg_2008.pdf (accessed May 29, 2007).

permission for members of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, or APHC (a loose conglomeration of Kashmiri political parties opposed to Indian rule) to travel to Pakistan.³

Growing engagement with China, including trade and a declared Sino-Indian Strategic Partnership, has also reduced the lingering bad taste from the border issues that led to the 1962 war. In the event that conflicts do flare up, India is seeking not just engagement but power projection capabilities. India's first fighter planes based outside its borders are now at an air base in Tajikistan, potentially forcing Pakistan to look at an enemy coming from two directions in the event of any crisis.

The main question this thesis will answer is whether India's quest to become a great power with expanded power and influence will be compatible with U.S. interests and goals. Along the way it will describe the causes or drivers of India's efforts to expand power, attempt to predict how successful India will be, and look at what tools India is using.

This thesis will argue that India is, indeed, rising and trying to become a great power, both through a conscious, government-driven effort to increase regional power and through the natural process of economic development and increasing cultural power. India is increasing its power using techniques of both hard power—military relationships, economic interaction, aid packages, and diplomacy—and soft power tools, “shaping” strategies, or actions that go towards making India's culture and society more attractive, including public relations campaigns and cinema and other cultural exports.⁴ This thesis will highlight areas and issues of potential disagreement or conflict between the United States and India.

Ultimately, India will prove to be a useful strategic partner for the United States, but relations between the countries will always remain grounded in mutual interests rather than a long-term alliance; India will never be an all-purpose, all-weather ally of the

³ Sumit Ganguly. “Will Kashmir Stop India's Rise?” *Foreign Affairs* 85:4, (July/August 2006): 48.

⁴ For an explanation of hard and soft power see Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2004).

United States. The thesis will conclude by discussing strategies and suggestions for policymakers for how United States should deal with a rising India in order to ensure that its rise is compatible, rather than in conflict, with U.S. interests.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years many books and articles have been written about how India is changing. A part of that literature focuses on India's economic success, and another part discusses U.S.-India relations. In a similar vein, many books and articles have been written about the "rise of China," discussing China's economic growth and power ambitions in the region and the world.⁵ Yet India, despite similar growth, capabilities, and actions, has not had nearly as many similar articles written about its own political and strategic rise.

For the first several decades of its existence as a modern nation-state India had an anemic economic growth rate, which was jokingly referred to as the "Hindu" growth rate. This largely stemmed from the tightly controlled economy directed by India's first leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, which was characterized by a series of socialist five-year plans. During the early decades India was also a major player, and in many cases the leader, of the "non-aligned movement" of mostly less-developed nations that chose not to align themselves closely with either the United States or the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Beginning in the 1980s and accelerating rapidly following the Cold War, India gradually improved relations with the West, especially the United States, and followed a path of economic liberalization that coincided with the technology boom in the 1990s and has resulted in much higher growth rates.⁶ Many articles discuss India's domestic

⁵ See, for example, Phillip C. Saunders "China's Global Activism: Strategy, Drivers, and Tools" Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Occasional Paper, October 2006. <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/symposia/pacific2006/saunders.pdf> (accessed March 26, 2007); the January/February 2005 issue of *Foreign Policy* titled "China Rising: How the Asian Colossus is Changing Our World;" or "A Rising China," *The New York Times*, Editorial, (May 6, 2005).

⁶ See any number of books on the economic history of India, including, Arvind Virmani. "India's Economic Growth: From Socialist Rate of Growth to Bharatiya Rate of Growth," Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, New Delhi Working Papers Number 122 (2004). <http://www.icrier.org/pdf/wp122.pdf> (accessed April 1, 2007)

reforms, resulting economic growth and future, including many from the business community on how to profit by doing business with or in India.⁷ Other books and articles explore whether India can continue its recent rapid economic growth.⁸ While both Indian and non-Indian authors write these articles, few address future Indian growth, economic or otherwise, from a strategic point of view.

India's rivalries, including frequent conflicts with Pakistan and on a more infrequent basis with China, are well documented. The conflicts ultimately inspired India to develop nuclear weapons, first testing them in 1974 and then again in 1998.⁹ The United States has changed the way it now views India since the 1998 nuclear explosion. Although India is still a non-member of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (it can only join the NPT as a non-nuclear weapons state because it tested its nuclear device after the treaty's deadline), the 2006 U.S.-India nuclear deal would effectively declare India a de-facto legitimate nuclear weapons power. Since India's economic improvement in the 1990s, and especially since the nuclear test in 1998, a slate of books and articles have been written debating how the United States should engage with India.¹⁰ The number of such books and articles increased following the 2005 announcement of a U.S.-India strategic partnership, the first step of which was the 2006 U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal.¹¹ Even most articles by Indian authors seem to focus almost exclusively on the relationship with the United States rather than viewing the rise of India and India's overall role in the region and the world from either an international or Indian

⁷ For example, Paul Davies. *What's This India Business: Offshoring, Outsourcing, and the Global Services Revolution* (London: Nicholas Brealey International, 2004).

⁸ Gurcharan Das. "The India Model," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 85, No. 4, (July/August 2006): 2-16.

⁹ One excellent book on the India-China conflict is John W. Garver. *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001). Many other books thoroughly explore the long conflict between India and Pakistan, including, T. V. Paul, Ed. *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ See Stephen J. Blank. "Natural Allies? Regional Security in Asia and Prospects for Indo-American Strategic Cooperation," monograph, Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, October 2005; Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy and the Bomb*. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

¹¹ For example, Aston B. Carter. "America's New Strategic Partner?" *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 85, No. 4 (July/August 2006): 33-44.

perspective.¹² A very few books, such as C. Raja Mohan's *Crossing the Rubicon: the Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy*, do look specifically at India's rise, but many focus more on India's rise to this point than on the future. An exception is Nayar and Paul's book, which does look at the future, but from a more theoretical perspective than this thesis.¹³

1. Major Approaches to the Issue

One major debate surrounding India's increasing power is the extent to which India can continue to increase its strategic role in the world. While many articles describe India's economic success over the past decade and a half, some skeptics question whether India will be able to sustain this economic growth, frequently citing India's growing energy needs and lack of reliable sources.¹⁴ As one skeptic of India's capability to become a world power put it, "India's import dependence has intensified concerns that without reliable, affordable energy it will be unable to sustain high economic growth."¹⁵ Others examine India's economy and believe it has the capability to grow for years to come.¹⁶

¹² C. Raja Mohan. *Impossible Allies: Nuclear India, United States and the Global Order*, (New Delhi: India Research Press, 2006).

¹³ C. Raja Mohan. *Crossing the Rubicon: the Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Pelgrave MacMillan, 2004); Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul. *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ India's energy needs are estimated in "Integrated Energy Policy: Report of the Expert Community," New Delhi: Government of India Planning Commission, August 2006, available at www.planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/rep_intengy.pdf, and Carin Zissis, "India's Energy Crunch," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, December 8, 2006, available at www.cfr.org/publication/12200/.

¹⁵ Tanvi Madan, "Energy Security Series: India," DC: The Brookings Foreign Policy Studies Energy Security Series, November 2006, available at www.brookings.edu/fp/research/energy/2006india.pdf.

¹⁶ Edward Luce, *In Spite of the Gods: the Rise of Modern India*, (New York: Doubleday, 2007); Kushik Basu, Ed., *India's Emerging Economy: Performance and Prospects in the 1990s and Beyond*, (Boston: MIT Press, 2004).

Other authors take a narrow view and focus only on certain aspects of India's rise, most commonly focusing on economic development and growth.¹⁷ They focus on individual economic policies, and help us understand the direction India is heading. Similarly, another set of narrowly focused authors look at India's growing military power, particularly increasing military hardware purchases from the United States, Israel, and other sources.¹⁸

Since so many articles are written about China's increasing power, many of the articles that are written about India's rise compare it to China, and discuss India's ability to compete with China.¹⁹ The areas of competition discussed range from economic competition to potential military competition, and sometimes include shaping strategies in states close to both. Depending on the author, India is depicted as a little brother to either China or the United States, or it is said to have distinct interests that could end up compatible with either, both, or neither.

Many of the more focused articles are on India's entreaties towards certain regions, often written by scholars of the specific region rather than Indian experts.²⁰ They

¹⁷ Edgardo M. Favaro and Ashok K. Lahiri, Eds., *Fiscal Policies and Sustainable Growth in India*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Tim Callen, Patricia Reynolds, and Christopher Towe, Eds., *India at the Crossroads: Sustaining Growth and Reducing Poverty*, (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2001).

¹⁸ "Indian Army to purchase Bell 407 Shen helicopters," India-defense.com September 18, 2006, available at www.india-defence.com/reports/2518 (accessed December 12, 2007); "Indian Military Bolstered by Foreign Purchases, Cooperation: New Delhi Seeks Ability to Stabilize Region Through Russian Arms, Cooperation with U.S." Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, April 23, 2004, available at www.jinsa.org/articles/articles.html/function/view/categoryid/1949/documentid/2466/history/3,2360,1947,1949,2466 (accessed December 12, 2007); Donald L. Berlin "Navy Reflects India's Strategic Ambitions." *Asia Times Online*, November 5, 2004, www.atimes.com (accessed December 12, 2007); Alan K. Kronstadt, "The Asian Way to Insecurity: India's Rise and the Meaning of Increased Power Projection Capabilities in South Asia." Paper Presented to the 42nd Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Chicago, Illinois, February 21, 2001.

¹⁹ John W. Garver *The China-India-U.S. Triangle: Strategic Relations in the Post Cold War Era*. Seattle: NBR Asia, NBR Analysis, Vol. 13, No. 5 (2002); John W. Garver *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001; Yasheng Huang and Tarun Khanna, "Can India Overtake China?" *Foreign Policy* (July-August 2003), pp. 74-80.

²⁰ Stephen Blank "India's Rising Profile in Central Asia." *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, April-June, 2003, pp. 139-157; Bagila Bukharbayeva, "India seeks Increased Engagement in Central Asia." *Associated Press*, November 6, 2003, retrieved from Lexis-Nexis; John Calabrese, "Indo-Iranian Relations in Transition." *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. XXV, No. 5, (Summer 2002): 60-82; G. V. C. Naidu, "Whither the Look East Policy: India and Southeast Asia." *Strategic Analysis*, XXVIII: 2 (April-June 2004).

will provide excellent sources for the case studies, and collectively serve to develop a comprehensive view of India's regional and global shaping strategies. India is seeking to expand its presence in three regions: Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Each of these three regions has something India is searching for: natural resources, bases to enable India to project power more effectively, markets for new goods, possible allies in future conflicts, and other less tangible benefits. Expanding into these regions benefits India in the present, and the future, not just to demonstrate that it is a regional power but also to help it become one.

A few books and articles do look specifically and comprehensively at India as a rising power.²¹ Some scholars, such as India's Raja Mohan, argue that India's rise—and status as a nuclear power—will make India and the United States “impossible allies” with fundamental differences and lead to inevitable disagreement, if not necessarily conflict. Other scholars, such as T.V. Paul and Ashley Tellis, are much more optimistic about the relationship, arguing that U.S. and Indian interests will and should continue to be very closely aligned for the foreseeable future.

This thesis will argue that India is indeed consciously attempting to increase its power. It will explore India's power expansion strategies in three regional case studies of India's diplomacy. Additionally, it will provide an increased emphasis on, and understanding of, India's soft power shaping strategies in addition to the simple calculations of hard power analysis. It will argue that as India rises, U.S. and India interests may not always align. Finally it will provide value added by attempting to predict future Indian actions, highlighting issues and regions where India's expansion may cause tension with the United States, and providing recommendations for U.S. policymakers.

²¹ See Yevgeny Bendersky, "India as a Rising Power." *Asia Times*, 20 August 2004; Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001; Michael R. Chambers, ed., *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College. Baldev Raj Nayar & T. V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003.

C. METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

In order to examine the question of India's expanded global activism the second chapter of this thesis is a more extended study of the change in Indian foreign policy from 1947 to the present. Chapters three, four, and five are case studies examining, respectively, India's efforts to expand its influence in Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. Each case study will discuss India's objectives for expanded activism in the region, the military interaction between India and the countries in the region, the level and trends of trade or other economic activity (including aid, loans or other assistance), the diplomatic intercourse between the Indian government and the key countries in each region, and the level of cultural interaction. By using the same format for each case study it will be easier to identify trends, as well as compare Indian objectives and successes in each region with U.S. objectives and successes.

The Southeast Asia case study will look at India's formal strategic defense partnerships with many of the countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand. Of these the closest relationship is almost certainly with Indonesia. The Indian navy has conducted joint exercises with Indonesia, and was one of the major contributors in the rescue and recovery operations following the 2005 tsunami.²²

The case study on Central Asia will explore India's expansion into the region, with specific focus on India's new military base in Tajikistan. India recently established an air base in Tajikistan, its first permanent military base in another country, covets the region's energy resources—both oil and gas and the potential for hydroelectric power, despite the necessity of moving the energy either through or around its traditional foe, Pakistan—and has helped in the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan.²³ The base will allow India to project military power into the volatile Central Asian neighborhood. Additionally, the foothold would potentially allow India to develop another angle of

²² "India's ASEAN Strategy," *Jane's Intelligence Digest*, October 17, 2003; "India, Indonesia Begin Joint Naval Patrols," *Agence France Presse*, September 4, 2002, retrieved from Lexis-Nexis.

²³ "India has Acknowledged Establishing an Air Base in Tajikistan," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, August 26, 2002, p.19, and Kumar Amitav Chaliha, "India Moves on Central Asia," *Asia Times Online*, October 16, 2003.

attack against its old adversary, Pakistan. This chapter will examine the implications of that base and India's other interests in the region.

The third case study will focus on the Middle East, and specifically examine India's relations with Iran, which center largely on energy sources including oil and natural gas as well as the ongoing nuclear controversies and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) votes.²⁴ One issue this thesis will examine closely is the ongoing negotiations with Iran to build a natural gas pipeline across Pakistan to provide India with a direct source of energy with a more efficient transportation network.

Although India is attempting to expand in other countries and regions beyond Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, the goals in those three regions, and the techniques India is using to expand its influence, provide a good picture of India's efforts at becoming a regional and global power. Exploring India's objectives in each region compared to the United States' objectives for each region will highlight potential sources of disagreement and conflict for the future.

D. CONCLUSION

In 2002 the U.S. National Security Strategy reflected the Bush Administration's new opinion of India and sounded an optimistic note about future U.S.-India relations:

The United States has undertaken a transformation in its bilateral relationship with India based on a conviction that U.S. interests require a strong relationship with India. We are the two largest democracies, committed to political freedom protected by representative government. India is moving toward greater economic freedom as well. We have a common interest in the free flow of commerce, including through the vital sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. Finally, we share an interest in fighting terrorism and in creating a strategically stable Asia. Differences remain, including over the development of India's nuclear and missile programs, and the pace of India's economic reforms. But while in the past these

²⁴ Naseem Khan, "Vajpayee's Visit to Iran: Indo-Iranian Relations and Prospects of Bilateral Cooperation." *Strategic Analysis*, September, 2001 www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa_sep01khm01.html (accessed December 12, 2007); Farah Naaz, "Indo-Iranian Relations 1947-2000, *Strategic Analysis*, XXIV:10 (January 2001) www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa_jan01naf01.html (accessed December 12, 2007); Harsh V. Pant, "India and Iran: An 'Axis in the Making'," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLIV, No. 3, (May-June 2004) 375; Satyanarayan Pattanayak, "Oil As a Factor in Indo-Gulf Relations." *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. XXV, No. 3, (June, 2001) www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa_june01pas02 (accessed December 12, 2007).

concerns may have dominated our thinking about India, today we start with a view of India as a growing world power with which we have common strategic interests. Through a strong partnership with India, we can best address any differences and shape a dynamic future.²⁵

India is a rising power in Asia and the world, and U.S. policymakers need to pay attention to what the world will look like as India begins to achieve its great power goals and how to make sure that world is as compatible with U.S. interests as possible. The current U.S. policymakers seem to believe the United States can buy India's allegiance, especially in a rivalry or potential conflict with China, through the civilian nuclear deal, military sales and cooperation, and economic cooperation. The strategic partnership that has formed between the two countries is close now, but is in reality based on a confluence of present interests rather than a long-term alliance. The United States should continue to work with India whenever interests align, and should work to align those interests whenever possible, but should not count India as a close ally if India's interests are not the same.

Indian leaders and policymakers believe that India's destiny is to be a great power, possibly even rivaling or surpassing China and the United States in the coming years. In his fictional account of a future conflict, former Indian Chief of Army Staff General S. Padmanabhan has the Indian Prime Minister state, after deflecting an initial U.S. attack, "I would like to assure you that we are fully ready to meet the US challenge and with our strength of will and righteousness of our cause, we will defeat the United States."²⁶

The remaining chapters in this thesis will describe the transformation in Indian foreign policy and explore India's expanded foreign policy toward Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Along the way each chapter will address different aspects of Indian policy and tools it is using to gain power. The chapter on Southeast Asia will focus on India's soft power, the chapter on Central Asia will discuss India's

²⁵ "National Security Strategy of the United States," U.S. National Security Council, September 17, 2002.

²⁶ S. Padmanabhan. *The Writing on the Wall: India Checkmates America 2017*. Dehradun, India: Defence Spectrum Books (2004): 249-50.

military power and interests, and the chapter on the Middle East will include a discussion of India's diplomatic history, including with the United Nations and International Atomic Energy Agency.

The final chapter will summarize the moves India has made and is currently making and draw conclusions about India's attempt to become a great power. It will speculate as to what India's next objectives as it increases in power might be, and what further tools it might use to achieve those goals. Finally it will identify some recommendations for U.S. policymakers, including how to avoid depending on India for too much in the event that interests are no longer aligned, and ways to encourage the two countries to remain close even when they may disagree.

II. WHENCE A MAJOR POWER? INDIA'S GROWING GLOBAL ACTIVISM

A. INTRODUCTION

India is currently at a foreign policy crossroads. It does not yet possess the capability to project power that the major powers of the world have, but it certainly has many of the right tools and is constantly increasing its power. International relations theories offer contradicting perspectives for explaining India's rise and predicting its future. The liberalism school of international relations holds that complex interdependence of economic, diplomatic, and cultural interaction among nations will bind them together and reduce potential conflicts. Realists argue that power dynamics shape the international world, that international relations is potentially a zero-sum game, and that relations among international actors are generally competitive. India's economic interactions certainly lend credibility to the liberalism argument, since the Indian economy has boomed in recent years due to direct foreign investment and India's moves to focus the economy on the international service sector and international trade. However, India also has one of the world's largest militaries, and is attempting to reassert itself in the areas of its historical sphere of influence.²⁷ If the realists are correct, the supply of power and influence is not infinite, and India's increasing power necessarily means that one or more other actors are losing relative power, something they probably will not do lying down. The predicted consequences of India's increasing interdependence with South Asia and with the rest of the world, and of its increasing ability to project hard, particularly military, power are in opposition to each other, one trending towards predicted peace and the other towards increasing conflict. The complexities of India's increasing international profile will continue to play out for many years, and will provide valuable fodder for international relations scholars to test their theories.

²⁷ For statistics on India's military see www.defenceindia.com. For a discussion of India's view of its historical sphere of influence see the first chapter of John W. Garver. *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001).

This chapter provides an historical background to India's change in foreign policy, from its view of its historical sphere of influence through the years of the non-aligned movement to the liberalization of the economy and efforts to become a regional and global power. It will identify the main drivers of this change, and will attempt to answer whether the change towards becoming a regional and global power is a conscious effort on behalf of policymakers in the government or is more caused or driven by non-governmental actors or outside events.

In order to answer this question, this chapter will begin with a brief history of Indian foreign policy and a description of the transformation to the current status of India's foreign policy. It will examine India's view of its historical area of influence, its participation and leadership in the non-aligned movement, the changes caused by the end of the Cold War, the economic liberalization of the early 1990s, the nuclear program, the decision to test leading to sanctions and eventually the U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal, and end with a status report on U.S.-India relations. Following the historical discussion, the next section will discuss the drivers of India's desire for power projection capabilities. The penultimate section will examine the tools India has at its disposal for expanding its regions of influence and increasing its power projection capability. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of the extent to which India's expanded global activism has, and will be, driven by conscious decisions by Indian policymakers.

B. HISTORY OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

India has historically viewed itself as a great power, with influence stretching to the Pacific Ocean and as far away as Africa. For thousands of years India was known far and wide as a place of great riches, and great empires from the Mughals to Alexander the Great tried hard to reach and control India. Until India was created as an independent country its influence was spread through others and the focus on India was inward from other powers trying to gain control of the rich resources. Once India achieved independence its foreign policy began looking outward, trying to serve as a leader of the non-aligned movement. With the end of the Cold War India reinvented itself by reforming its economy, which in turn provided Indian leaders and policymakers the

means to pursue a more aggressive, outward-looking foreign policy with the goal of transforming India into the great power it believes it should be.

1. Indian Sphere of Influence

Indians view their historical area of influence as including all of Central Asia, most of Southeast Asia as far as Indonesia, and far enough North to include all of Tibet. John Garver notes that,

At the core of modern India's nationalist narrative is the notion that India is a great nation whose radiant influence molded a wide swath of the world beyond its boundaries.... The geographic scope of India's traditional sphere of influence was neatly presented by a series of exhibitions set up at the First Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in March-April 1947... The exhibition... identified Burma, Siam (Thailand), Malaya, Cambodia, Champa, Sumatra, Java, and Bali as regions of Southeast Asia which had received 'strong influences from India in the domain of religion, language, art, and architecture.'²⁸

Garver points out the overlapping views of areas of influence between China and India, as seen in Figure 1, and predicts that since both countries are rising powers attempting to expand their international influence the potential for conflict of some type is high.

²⁸ Garver. *Protracted Contest*: 11-12.

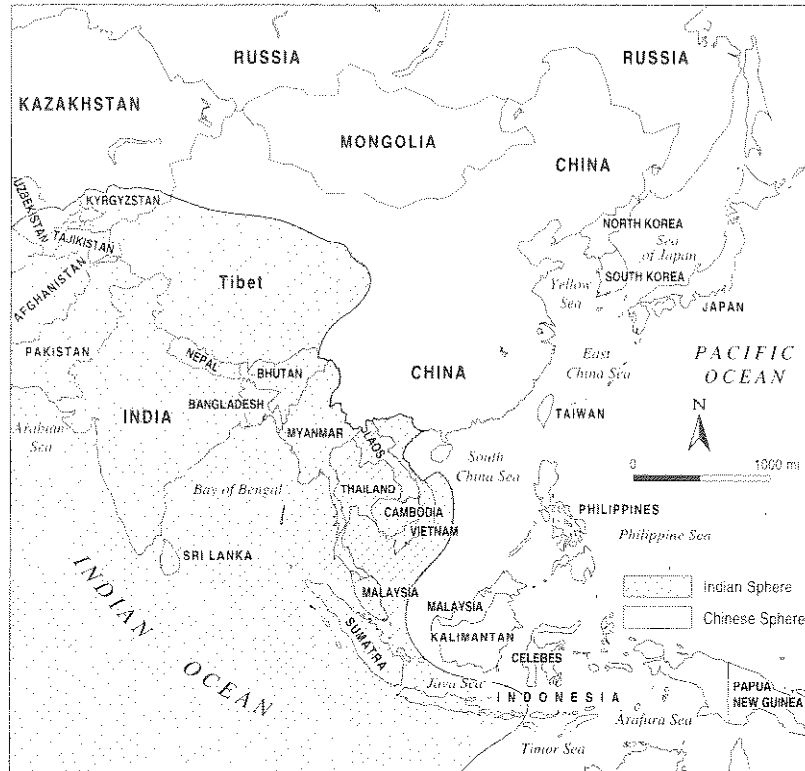


Figure 1. Map of Overlap of Perceived Indian and Chinese Historic Spheres of Influence [From Garver, *Protracted Contest*].²⁹

India may not directly state a desire to return to having influence over this entire region, but its actions are certainly focused on using all of its tools of diplomacy to expand back into many of the countries within this circle.

2. India's Independence

India achieved independence in the very early years of the Cold War, and almost immediately faced a choice between the two opposing sides. Rather than allying closely with either side India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, decided to try to take India on its own path. As early as September 7, 1946, when he was still vice chairman of the interim government, Nehru indicated that India would be hesitant to ally itself with

²⁹ Garver. *Protracted Contest*: 15. Original sources, For India, *Asian Relations, Being Report of the Proceedings and Documentation of the First Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi, March-April 1947* (New Delhi, India: Asian Relations Organization, 1948), 302-10; for China, "A Brief History of Modern China" (Peking, 1954), reproduced in the United States Central Intelligence Agency, *People's Republic of China, Atlas* (Washington, D.C.: United States Central Intelligence Agency, 1971), 75.

either of the winning sides of World War II, saying “We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disaster on an even vaster scale.”³⁰ Later Nehru, and other Third World leaders, formed an organization dedicated to non-alignment, known as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), formally founded in 1961 at the first Non-Alignment Movement Summit in Brioni, Yugoslavia, but initially agreed to at an earlier conference in 1955 in Indonesia.³¹ The term non-alignment was introduced by Nehru during a 1954 speech in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in which he outlined his five principles of non-alignment: 1) mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, 2) mutual non-aggression, 3) mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, 4) equality and mutual benefits, 5) peaceful co-existence.

Despite its leadership in the Third World, until the 1980s India had an extremely poor economic growth rate, partly due to a series of socialist five-year economic plans. These socialist economic tendencies brought India ever closer to the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence during the 1950s and 1960s, despite India’s professed position as the leader of the NAM. In addition to economic factors, two strategic factors enhanced India’s connection with the Soviet Union. First, during India’s 1962 border war with China, India was worried about a pending Chinese air strike and asked for military assistance and protection from the United States. The request was either turned down or ignored—depending on differing reports—by President Kennedy, who was busy dealing with the Cuban Missile Crisis at the same time. Although Kennedy did eventually send an aircraft carrier into the region, by that time China had already achieved its goals and declared a ceasefire.³² The war not only undermined Nehru’s efforts to have India and China lead an Asian movement together, but India also viewed the United States as

³⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru. *Speeches, Vol. 1 (September 1946-May 1949)* (New Delhi, India: Publications Division, Government of India, June 1967): 2-3.

³¹ Non-Aligned Movement website, available at <http://www.cubanoal.cu/ingles/index.html> (accessed June 1, 2007).

³² Michael Brecher. “Non-Alignment Under Stress: the West and the India-China Border War,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 52, No. 4. (Winter, 1979-1980).

unreliable at best, a perception that continues among many Indian strategic thinkers.³³ Second, India's ongoing conflict with Pakistan resulted in India developing a relationship with Afghanistan to counter Pakistan (and likewise Pakistan developed a close strategic relationship with both Iran and China to try to counter India).³⁴ When Afghanistan's socialist government faced difficulties and the Soviet Union entered to try to preserve socialism in Central Asia in 1979, India supported both their socialist Afghan allies and the Soviet Union.

3. Indian Internal Politics

The dominant political party throughout much of India's history has been the Indian National Congress (INC), or simply the Congress party, the party of Nehru, and Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. Because of Congress'—and especially Nehru's—leadership on the socialist economic plans, the orthodox foreign policy position of Congress and leftist intellectuals and politicians became intertwined with a vision of the non-aligned movement close to the Soviet Union.³⁵ C. Raja Mohan's explanation for this division in Indian politics is that,

The Left saw expansion of the NAM's influence in the 1970s as a reflection of the fundamental contradiction between the national aspirations of the developing world and the imperialist political and economic exploitation of the Third World. If the Left welcomed India's non-alignment for its anti-Western orientation, the Right opposed it for the very same reason... Nevertheless, when the Janata Party—a loose conglomeration of non-Congress parties—defeated Indira Gandhi in the 1977 elections, it argued the case for a foreign policy in favour of genuine non-alignment as opposed to one tilted towards the Soviet Union. Once in power, the Janata Party recognized that the strategic necessity of the close

³³ Opinions about the unreliability of the United States were expressed at the *U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation* conference in April 2007: Peter R. Lavoy and Robin Walker. "Conference Report: U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation," Center for Contemporary Conflict, (April 25-26, 2007) <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jun/lavoy2Jun07.asp> (accessed February 25, 2008). These feelings were especially strong when discussing the United States as a supplier of military hardware, with many Indians wondering if the United States would continue to supply replacement parts in the event of another crisis with Pakistan or another country in the region.

³⁴ Vali Nasr, lecture, 4 June 2007.

³⁵ See Nalini Kant Jha. *Domestic Imperatives in India's Foreign Policy*, (New Delhi, India: South Asian Publishers 2002), especially chapter 2.

relationship with the Soviet Union, and the then-foreign minister, Vajpayee, did little to disrupt the ties with Moscow.³⁶

This long-term battle between the left and the right in India was never really resolved due to the balance of payments crises surrounding the end of the Cold War. The debate among foreign policy scholars and policymakers in India—especially those aligned with the Congress party—continues between those who seek a return to the foreign policy of non-alignment as envisioned by Nehru, and those advocating a more aggressive foreign policy, especially including closer relations with the United States. In the coalition government led by current Prime Minister Manmohan Singh the communist parties advocating the continuation of non-alignment threatened to withdraw from the coalition if the government proceeded with the U.S.-India nuclear deal, thus putting the deal and closer ties with the United States on hold until at least the next election.³⁷

4. The End of the Cold War

Even before the actual fall of the Soviet Union, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was beginning to search for a new, more independent, foreign policy, separate from both the East and the West, but also from other NAM states.

Gandhi was aware that the NAM was running out of steam in the mid-1980s and looked for ways to rejuvenate it as well as for alternative mechanism to project India's views on the global stage. On the disarmament front, for example, he enthusiastically backed the five-continent, six-nation initiative that brought together a diverse group of nations—India, Sweden, Greece, Tanzania, Mexico and Argentina.³⁸

With the fall of its biggest ally, the Soviet Union, in 1991, India searched for a new foreign policy beyond non-alignment.

In the first few years following the end of the Cold War India's foreign policy transformation largely consisted of economic liberalization and greater economic

³⁶ C. Raja Mohan *Crossing the Rubicon*, 34-5.

³⁷ See numerous news reports from the U.S. or Indian press, for example, Somini Sengupta. "U.S.-India Nuclear Pact Runs into (Surprise!) Politics." *The New York Times*, (October 19, 2007).

³⁸ C. Raja Mohan. *Crossing the Rubicon*: 32.

interaction with the rest of the world. The Indian government had previously tried to liberalize the economy, but faced extensive political resistance. In the 1980s the Congress party held almost three-quarters of the seats in the lower house of parliament, but Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's government employed a poor strategy that involved overestimating its power and trying to force through economic reforms. Gandhi's efforts ultimately failed due to mass mobilization over bread and butter issues. As Ashutosh Varshney put it, "The opposition came, first of all, from the expected quarters: the leftist parties, trade unions, and left-wing economists..." but since the Congress party had an absolute majority in the parliament even a combined opposition could not stop the reforms.³⁹ Rajiv's mistake came when his first reforms were to reduce the subsidies on petroleum and petroleum products, food, and fertilizer, making them more expensive. This enabled opponents of the reforms to paint the Rajiv government as elitist and anti-poor, and they organized massive protests in major cities only fourteen months after Rajiv took power.

5. The Rao Government's Reforms

Despite the Rajiv government's failure to implement its goals, the government of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in the early- to mid-1990s was able to successfully pass many of the same reforms, despite Rao's Congress party having a minority of the seats in the Indian Parliament at the time and needing a coalition in order to govern. The Rao government's reforms starting in 1991 were different for a number of reasons. First, although the reforms may have been desired by Rao and his Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh, liberalizing the economy was not one of Congress' stated goals during the 1991 election. India in the early 1990s experienced a severe balance of payments crisis, and had to dip into its gold reserves for the first time in order to make the

³⁹ Ashutosh Varshney, "Mass Politics or Elite Politics? India's Economic Reforms in Comparative Perspective," in *India in the Era of Economic Reforms*, p. 242.

payments on their loans.⁴⁰ When a country faces balance-of-payments crises the International Monetary Fund requires fundamental changes in the country's economy, specifically liberalization. The economic crisis both helped force the Rao government to liberalize the economy and provided it with political cover for the reforms it already wanted to make. As Varshney says, "There is no doubt that the external crisis of 1991 opened the way for reforms."⁴¹ Additionally, in the early 1990s, "The country was going through massive Hindu-Muslim upheaval, on the one hand, and serious dispute over caste-based affirmative action on the other. To make matters worse, two insurgencies—one in Punjab, another in Kashmir—were showing no signs of abatement."⁴² The main reason the public at large did not pay attention to the reforms was that the debate over the rising Hindu nationalism, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and other nationalist parties, distracted the public at large and served as a more looming threat in the minds of most politicians than the political reforms. The Rao government was able to institute many of those same reforms in the early 1990s because it was enabled by the 1991 economic crisis, and because the general population was too distracted and threatened by identity politics to oppose the reforms.

6. Nuclear Weapons and Indian Foreign Policy

Along with economic liberalization came the maturation of India's nuclear weapons program. In 1974 Indira Gandhi made the decision to demonstrate India's nuclear capability with a "peaceful nuclear explosion." Since India had not tested a nuclear device prior to the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), it was a non-nuclear country by the definition of the treaty, and the United States and many other countries placed sanctions on India.

In May 1998 as India searched for a way to assert its new foreign policy, put Pakistan on notice after decades of potential conflicts, and earn respect as a major player on the world scale, the newly elected BJP-led coalition government under Prime Minister

⁴⁰ Anshu Chatterjee, Lecture.

⁴¹ Varshney, p. 245.

⁴² Varshney, p. 238-9.

Atal Behari Vajpayee tested five more nuclear devices. This led to condemnation from much of the world and sanctions from the United States. Ultimately however the 1998 tests at Pokran at least partially accomplished some of India's goals, forcing the rest of the world and the United States in particular to deal with India as an emerging major power in the region and the world. C. Raja Mohan writes,

Although the Clinton administration was not interested in an alliance, the nuclear tests forced the United States to engage India seriously for the first time in five decades. That engagement did not resolve the nuclear differences, but it did bring Clinton to India in March 2000—the first American presidential visit to India in 22 years.⁴³

As an Indian governmental official at the 2007 *U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation* conference pointed out, “Indo-U.S. relations since the Cold War have been like the Mumbai stock market: it has its ups and downs, but the overall trend is up.”⁴⁴ He pointed to 1998 as one of the low points, but noted that it led to the all-time high of the 2005 civilian nuclear agreement between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President George W. Bush. The agreement, which has passed through the U.S. Congress before reaching a sticking point with the communist parties in the ruling coalition of the Indian Parliament, calls for India to separate its nuclear reactors into civilian and military categories, and subject the civilian reactors to IAEA inspections. Additionally India wants to build several more reactors in order to supplement its domestic energy supply. In return the United States will establish an agreement under section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act of 1954, known as a 123 agreement, in order to allow civilian nuclear technology and fuel to be sold to India, despite its status as a non-member state of the NPT. Politically in India,

[Indian Prime Minister Manmohan] Singh supporters in the National Congress Party have downplayed the importance of the few obligations that India has undertaken, such as the commitment to voluntarily subject some of its nuclear facilities to inspections, a routine practice in all other recognized nuclear states, including the United States. Criticism from the

⁴³ C. Raja Mohan. “India and the Balance of Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85 No. 4 (July/August 2006), 27.

⁴⁴ Lavoy and Walker. *U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation*.

opposition BJP has been narrow and technical—and it probably reflects the BJP’s chagrin that the agreement was secured while the National Congress Party was in power.⁴⁵

Mohan argues that while the 1998 nuclear tests forced Clinton to take India seriously, it wasn’t until George W. Bush took office that the true context of U.S.-India relations was transformed. Bush “has removed many of the sanctions, opened the door for high-tech cooperation, lent political support to India’s own war on terrorism, ended the historical U.S. tilt toward Pakistan on Kashmir, and repositioned the United States in the Sino-Indian equation by drawing closer to New Delhi.”⁴⁶

In addition to the end of the Cold War and the necessity of economic liberalization, India moved closer to the United States following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Less than two months later terrorists attacked the Indian Parliament building, generating sympathy and understanding for the other in both countries. “[India] lent active support to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan by protecting U.S. assets in transit through the Strait of Malacca in 2002... [and] came close to sending a division of troops to Iraq in the summer of 2003 before pulling back at the last moment.”⁴⁷ The closer interaction with the United States on the nuclear deal and the war on terror have resulted in a higher favorable view of the United States among Indian respondents than among respondents in any of the 15 countries surveyed in a 2005 Pew Research Center poll.⁴⁸

C. INDIAN TOOLS FOR POWER PROJECTION

India is expanding its reach by using both hard power and soft power techniques. Hard power consists largely of economic and military power, those aspects addressed by

⁴⁵ Ashton B. Carter, “America’s New Strategic Partner?” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 85 No. 4 (July/August 2006), 36.

⁴⁶ C. Raja Mohan, “India and the Balance of Power,” 27.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Carter, “America’s New Strategic Partner?” 36.

realist theorists, such as E. H. Carr.⁴⁹ Hard power is generally associated with coercive or commanding behaviors, such as using military force, sanctions, payments, or bribes. Soft power, as described by Joseph Nye, derives from the attractiveness of a society or culture, and is associated with influence through agenda setting, the spread of ideas, and co-option using institutions, values, culture, or policies.⁵⁰ Nye stated that, “Simply put, power is the ability to alter the behavior of others to get what you want, and there are three ways to do that: coercion (sticks), payments (carrots) and attraction (soft power). If you are able to attract others, you can economize on the sticks and carrots.”⁵¹

Since independence India has lacked a great deal of hard power resources. It had enough military power to generally defend its borders, at least against Pakistan, but was badly defeated by China in 1962 and much of India’s defense depended on the protection of the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean. The economy was poor enough that India was a net recipient of aid, and so was not able to use incentives or sanctions to project its power. Since the end of the Cold War India’s ability to project power has increased along with its economy and military. However, India’s air force and navy are still relatively small, and its power projection capabilities remain limited. As Joseph Nye observes,

Looking ahead, China and India are the looming giants of Asia, with their huge populations and rapid economic growth rates. Not only are their military, or “hard power,” resources growing; there are signs that their soft-power resources are increasing, too. ... But the real promise for China and India lies in the future. A country’s soft power rests upon the attractiveness of its culture, the appeal of its domestic political and social values, and the style and substance of its foreign policies... In recent years, both China and India have adopted foreign policies that have increased their attractiveness to others... India benefits from democratic politics, but suffers from overly bureaucratized government. In foreign

⁴⁹ E. H. Carr. *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939: An introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1964): 108.

⁵⁰ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power*.

⁵¹ Joseph Nye, “Springing Tiger.” *India Today* (September 25, 2006). Available online at http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/ksgnews/Features/opeds/092506_nye.htm, (accessed May 25, 2007).

policy as well, both countries' reputations are burdened with the problems of long-standing disputes over Taiwan and Kashmir.⁵²

India's soft power capabilities, on the other hand, have traditionally been far more robust. One frequently repeated phrase when discussing the U.S.-India partnership is "the world's oldest democracy (the United States) with the world's largest democracy (India)." That history of strong, consistent democracy (with the notable exception of its suspension by Indira Gandhi in 1975)—especially rare among poor, third world, former colonial countries—provided India with credibility and leadership among countries in the non-aligned period and continues to serve as a role model for people in countries struggling with democracy. India views its area of historical cultural influence as spreading throughout most of Asia, but its modern cultural influence stretches far beyond that. In September 2006 the *Financial Times* noted that,

Next week, India will be guest of honour at the Frankfurt book fair and the subject of a four-month festival that opens at the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels. The two showcase events round off a year in which India has made a concerted effort to increase its "share of mind" to levels consistent with its own self-image as a major cultural power. India dominated discussions of the "creative imperative" at Davos in January, was "partner country" for the Hanover Trade Fair in May and then "theme country" at the Bonn Biennale, a culture fest for theatre lovers.⁵³

Part of India's global soft power reach is due to its extensive and well-dispersed diaspora, estimated at around twenty-two million people, which remains fairly well connected to South Asia. In the United States especially, the Indian population is both wealthy and powerful for its size. The Asian Indian community in the United States is still fairly small, with about 1.7 million people, but the Indian-American community is growing at around seven percent annually, making it one of the fastest growing

⁵² Joseph S. Nye. "Soft Power Matters in Asia." *The Japan Times* (December 5, 2005) http://bcsia.ksg.harvard.edu/publication.cfm?program=CORE&ctype=article&item_id=1332 (accessed June 7, 2007).

⁵³ Jo Johnson. "India Seeks 'Soft Power' as it Reasserts Identity." *Financial Times* (September 30, 2006) <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/a034c848-501f-11db-9d85-0000779e2340.html> (accessed June 5, 2007).

populations in the United States.⁵⁴ Additionally, the Indian-American community is disproportionately educated and wealthy, with one in nine Indian-Americans possessing assets of at least one million dollars, for a total of around 200,000 millionaires.⁵⁵ Indian-Americans are especially prevalent in certain states, such as New York, Illinois and California, and in influential fields, including medicine, high-tech fields and hotels. This wealth has enabled the Indian diaspora in the United States to wield political power to help influence U.S. foreign policy towards India. The strategic partnership in general, and the civilian nuclear deal in specific, between the two countries is the culmination of many years of efforts by the so-called India lobby, a group dedicated to drawing the two countries together and changing U.S. foreign policy to favor India and Indian interests.

India's cultural impact extends far beyond the reach of the twenty-two million Indians living abroad. One of the most visible aspects of modern Indian culture is the films produced in Mumbai, or Bollywood, which produces more movies than the United States every year. These movies are enjoyed worldwide, including among countries with disagreements with India, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Iran, encouraging local populations of those countries to have a more positive view of India than perhaps their governments do.

The Indian foreign policy and defense community wants to ensure that India's hard power capabilities are much more robust than they have been in recent decades. India has major defense acquisitions planned, primarily for the air force and navy, including the purchase of 126 fighter aircraft from the United States, which will increase India's ability to project military power beyond its borders. But no matter how fast the Indian military buys hardware, India's largest source of foreign policy power will likely continue to be its increasing economic might, economic interactions with other countries, and its ability to attract other countries to its point of view through the strength of its values and cultural connections.

⁵⁴ U.S. Census Bureau <<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>> or <http://usinpac.com/indian_americans.asp>

⁵⁵ Walter Anderson. "The Indian-American Community Comes into its Political Own." *India Abroad*, (September 1, 2006): A12.

D. CONCLUSION

India announced its arrival onto the world stage as a major power with five nuclear detonations in May 1998. Although the initial reaction was negative, and the other major powers are still adapting to the newcomer, the United States has largely embraced India's rise. This burst on to the international scene was the culmination of a changing foreign policy driven by both external events and conscious decisions by Indian leaders. Prime Minister Nehru led India through the non-aligned foreign policy with the intention of leading the third world but ending up closely aligned with the Soviet Union due to shared socialist values, external threats from China and Pakistan, and feelings of abandonment by the United States. The end of the Cold War and an internal economic crisis led to liberalizing the economy under Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Rao, resulting in increased engagement both in the region and with the West, and an improved economy that enabled India to increase its standing on the world stage.

India's current foreign policy is driven by the need to continue to grow the economy to keep up with a large and growing population. The economic growth requires large amounts of energy, which has led India to pursue a civilian nuclear power deal with the United States, as well as closer ties to energy—especially oil and gas—rich countries in the Middle East and Central Asia. India is also pursuing new markets, both in the West and closer to home, especially in South East Asia. Finally, India is still pursuing increased security from potential adversaries in the region, including Pakistan and China. In order to pursue its security agenda, India is obtaining military equipment, especially from the United States, but its major sources and tools of foreign policy strength remain its soft power: economic aid and trade, cultural and social connections, a tradition of democracy, and a widespread diaspora.

India's foreign policy transformation, from non-alignment and an inward focus to proclaiming itself a major power and looking to project power outwards, has been driven by both external events—such as the 1962 war with China, the end of the Cold War, the balance of payments crisis in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the September 11th terrorist attacks—and by the conscious decisions of leaders and policymakers—including

Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi, Vajpayee, Rao, and Singh—deciding that it is in India's best interests to look outwards and declare itself a major power. The debate continues within India over what direction its foreign policy should take, but the current momentum is pushing it strongly into a more ambitious engagement with the world. While India is not yet fully the major power it has proclaimed itself to be, it certainly has all the capabilities and drivers to become one of the new major powers for the next generation. The real question for international relations scholars remains how smoothly India's rise will go, and what actions the current major powers, particularly the United States, will take to promote, hinder, or shape India's rise.

III. HOLDING THEIR END UP: INDIAN SOFT POWER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

A. INTRODUCTION

India is being touted in many recent publications as a rising power in Asia—and has the potential to become one of the great powers in the world.⁵⁶ It has the world's second largest population, after China, a booming economy, and the second most dominant navy in the Indian Ocean (after the United States), bordering some of the world's key shipping lanes, especially for energy. The 1998 nuclear tests and the recent U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal are further elements in India's emergence. But India's efforts to increase its power and expand its sphere of influence are not based exclusively on the traditional tools of economic or military power. Indian policymakers are actively trying to promote India's image in the world and increase the attractiveness of its society, government, economy, and culture in order to bring other countries into closer relationships with India.

In the early 1990s Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power” to define the attractiveness of a country's international image.⁵⁷ Nye specifically discussed American soft power, although he briefly mentioned the possible soft power other countries might have, and he offered few specific policy recommendations on how to operationalize soft power. While a few articles discussed European soft power as an alternative to American soft power (especially in light of the increasing unpopularity of the Iraq War), few sources thoroughly discussed Asian soft power until Joshua Kurlantzick published a book on Chinese soft power, especially as it related to Africa, in 2007.⁵⁸ The few articles and

⁵⁶ See Yevgeny Bendersky. “India as a Rising Power,” *Asia Times*, (August 20, 2004); Stephen P. Cohen. *India: Emerging Power*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001); Baldev Raj Nayar & T. V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status*. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003); or Volume 85, Number 4 (July/August 2006) of *Foreign Affairs* on “The Rise of India.”

⁵⁷ Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

⁵⁸ Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

books that mentioned India's soft power usually did so in conjunction with or as an afterthought to China's soft power, ignoring important differences in strengths, weaknesses, goals, and techniques between the two potential Asian superpowers.⁵⁹ Although Nye and Kurlantzick—and indeed most other scholars discussing the issue—have slightly different definitions of soft power, both bring important points to the discussion. This chapter will discuss Indian soft power as something that lies somewhere between Nye's narrow definition and Kurlantzick's broad one.

No matter the specific definition, soft power is inherently difficult, if not impossible, to actually measure. Nye uses public opinion polls, primarily Pew polls, on the views of the United States in different countries at various points. This is problematic for several reasons, not the least of which is the lack of comparable data regarding other countries, such as polls on public perceptions of India or China. This chapter will rely more heavily on anecdotal evidence and policy outcomes to suggest whether India's soft power efforts appear to be effective, although, of course, policy outcomes are achieved with the help of multiple policy tools, not just soft power, so judging the impact of soft power itself will be difficult.

India is focusing its efforts to expand its influence on areas that Indians typically consider to be within their historical zone of cultural ties. While this area includes much of the Middle East, Central Asia, and the plains of Tibet, the regional ties are felt perhaps most strongly towards Southeast Asia. This chapter therefore focuses on India's efforts to expand its influence and shape the strategic environment in Southeast Asia by using and increasing its soft power capabilities. The focus on Southeast Asia brings other factors into play, perhaps most interestingly for this subject is the fact that Southeast Asian countries are being pulled in at least three different directions by both hard and soft power: toward China, India, and the United States.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Jehangir Pocha. "The Rising 'Soft Power' of India and China." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 20 (Winter 2003); Robyn Meredith. *The Elephant and the Dragon: the Rise of India and China and What it Means for All of Us*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007); or Peter Engardio, Ed. *Chinindia: How China and India are Revolutionizing Global Business*. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

This chapter asks whether Joseph Nye's predictions about the sources, use, and success of soft power hold true in the case of India's efforts to influence Southeast Asian countries. Along the way it will address the definition and measurement of soft power, how India's leaders think about and utilize hard versus soft power, and whether soft power strategies of one country are problematic for other countries (such as China and the United States) pursuing influence or shaping strategies in the same region.

The first section will deal with the theory of soft power, as originally defined by Nye and expanded upon for an Asian case by Kurlantzick, including debates on defining and measuring soft power. The second section will explore the way Indian policymakers think about building and using soft power. The third section will explore how effective India's soft power has been in Southeast Asia. The fourth and final section will look to the future and examine how the interaction between American, Chinese, and Indian soft power, especially in Southeast Asia, will play out.

Ultimately the chapter will argue that Nye's definition of soft power needs to be expanded or pushed outward to reflect the realities of power and countries' influence strategies. It concludes with a discussion of some of the implications for regional stability, and makes recommendations for U.S. policy.

B. THEORIES OF SOFT POWER

Of Nye's three types of power—military, economic, and soft power—the concepts of military and economic power are fairly well established and defined.⁶⁰ In Nye's formulation, soft power includes attraction and agenda-setting behaviors; has values, culture, policies, and institutions as its primary currencies; and includes the government policies of public diplomacy, and bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. He describes soft power as “an intangible attraction that persuades us to go along with others' purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place,” and states that it is a “social and economic by-product rather than solely a result of official government

⁶⁰ Nye. *Soft Power*

action.”⁶¹ As he puts it, hard power is someone jumping when you say jump because of either positive or negative incentives; soft power is making them want to jump without having to demand.

Nye’s formulation is that soft power is influenced by military and economic policy tools available to governments, but is separate from those interactions and is more based on culture than policies. Thus soft power is driven by private sector interactions as much or more than by a country’s government, although he does state that the way a country uses its economic and military power can hurt its reputation. The main government policy tool for increasing soft power is through sponsoring what Nye terms public diplomacy, which includes,

Daily communications, which involves explaining the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions...strategic communications, in which a set of simple themes is developed, much like what occurs in a political or advertising campaign... the development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels.⁶²

Kurlantzick argues that “soft power has changed...For the Chinese, soft power means anything outside of the military and security realm, including not only popular culture and public diplomacy but also more coercive economic and diplomatic levers like aid and investment and participation in multilateral organizations—Nye’s carrots and sticks. Indeed, Beijing offers the charm of a lion, not of a mouse: it can threaten other nations with these sticks if they do not help China achieve its goals, but it can offer sizable carrots if they do.”⁶³ In Kurlantzick’s study of China the policy tools that influence soft power extend far beyond simply public diplomacy. Although the Chinese government has greatly expanded public diplomacy efforts, especially in the realms of increasing educational exchanges with key countries and encouraging education on Chinese language and culture in other countries, it also very consciously uses aid and development projects and trade deals to influence its image. Because the Chinese

⁶¹ Nye. *Soft Power*, 7, 32.

⁶² Nye. *Soft Power*: 107-9.

⁶³ Kurlantzick. *Charm Offensive*: 6.

government has much more control over most aspects of its economy than the American government does, it has the ability and desire to wield more policy tools in order to increase China's image in the world.

During the 1990s the Clinton Administration did attempt what it deemed shaping strategies, policies designed to improve the United States' image and facilitate its international policy objectives.⁶⁴ However, those efforts were primarily recommendations for a "lighter leadership 'touch' in some areas and for stronger encouragement in others" when dealing with certain countries in order to "positively shape European security environment of the next century," thus simply avoiding losing the already achieved American soft power.⁶⁵ Ever since Nye coined the term, American soft power has been perceived of by American policymakers as something that is largely out of their hands and to the extent that they believe it even exists consists of the world's perception of American movies, music, television, and culture. Josef Joffe points out that in many cases American culture can be resented or despised and have a negative image in the rest of the world as well, as expressed in messages from Osama bin Ladin and others railing against the provocative nature of images in American music, television, and movies.⁶⁶ In China those aspects of culture are regulated, if not controlled, by the government, and thus are considered to be part of public diplomacy efforts. However, in the broader definition of soft power described by Kurlantzick, China sees soft power as something so desirable that it uses other policy tools besides public diplomacy to obtain that soft power rather than merely imitating the American stance of having the policy goal of not letting economic or military actions damage the country's soft power.

Soft power is inherently intangible and difficult to measure. Unlike military power, in which the size of a country's army, number of tanks, airplanes, and nuclear weapons can be counted or estimated, or economic power, where the gross domestic

⁶⁴ For a description of U.S. shaping strategies toward Europe see Stephen J. Blank, William T. Johnsen, Thomas-Durrell Young. "European Security: Washington's Shaping Strategy in Action." Report by the Strategic Studies Institute, (March 2000).

⁶⁵ Blank, Johnsen, and Young, "European Security:" iii, 2.

⁶⁶ Josef Joffe. "The Perils of Soft Power: Why America's Cultural Influence Makes Enemies, too." *The New York Times Magazine*, (May 14, 2006).

product, trade statistics, production rates, and other data can be analyzed, soft power has no defined units or levels. Certain statistics can be determined or at least estimated, such as the number of people speaking a certain language, watching movies or television from a certain country, the number of diplomats on the ground, or the number of exchange students studying in a given country, but those numbers cannot be combined into an index of soft power.

Perhaps the best way to measure soft power would be to look at whether desired policy outcomes were achieved. However, measuring policy outcomes would require knowing what the desired outcome was and comparing it to the actual result—a tautological exercise at best, and no easy task even with a government as prone to national strategies as the United States and far more difficult with more private or secretive governments like India or China. Additionally, even with a policy outcome it is difficult, if not impossible, to know what part of the success came from soft power and what was due to military or economic incentives. Even in an ideal setting where a policy objective was achieved in the absence of hard power (if such a scenario could ever exist) it would be impossible to know whether the target country would have been inclined toward such an agreement without years of closer ties or efforts to build soft power.

Nye uses public opinion polls conducted in other countries as a measure of a country's soft power, especially the U.S.-based Pew Global Attitudes Project's *What the World Thinks* polls.⁶⁷ These polls provide a baseline for what certain countries' populations think of various aspects of American culture and policies, including whether they admire U.S. technology and scientific advances; like American movies, music, and television; like American ideas about democracy; like the American way of doing business; and think it is good that American ideas and customs spread. Kurlantzick follows Nye's lead, using a poll of 22 and 33 countries to compare attitudes toward and

⁶⁷ Nye, *Soft Power*, 69-72, and elsewhere.

opinions of the United States and China in 23 countries in 2004-5 and 33 countries in 2006.⁶⁸ He uses these polls to demonstrate that American soft power is on the decline and Chinese soft power is on the rise.

One major problem with using public opinion polls as a stand in for a measure of soft power is that soft power can be divided into high and low soft power, the elites of a country and the general public. A poll of the general public may not capture how willing the policymakers in a particular country are to cooperate, since each group may have a different set of goals or base of information, and a country's population or even rulers can like American movies but still hate the country and be loath to cooperate—as with North Korea's Kim Jong Il, who is known to be an American movie buff. A second problem with using polls is that soft power is something that is built up over time whereas a poll measures people's opinion at one point in time, and thus are likely to reflect or be skewed by recent events—positive or negative—rather than accurately recording some level of built up diplomatic goodwill. Using trends in public opinion between different polls is perhaps a better indicator of whether a country's soft power is increasing or decreasing in a certain country or region, but it is still not useful or even possible to say that because 58 percent of the people in a given country like American culture that the United States has 5.8 units of soft power vis-à-vis that country. A final problem is that such public opinion polls are most commonly conducted by Western powers and the polling is easiest and probably most accurate when done in Western countries. So to the extent that polling data is useful in measuring soft power, it is primarily available to measure world opinions of the United States, and most accurately and frequently measures opinions in Europe; polling data on opinions around the world of China, India, or other countries is far more scarce. Polling data has many flaws, but is one of the only stand-ins for soft power available, so the results should be analyzed, but viewed with skepticism.

⁶⁸ Program on International Policy Attitudes, “23 Nation Poll: Who Will Lead the World?” 15 November 15, 2004-January 5, 2005; Program on International Policy Attitudes, “33 Nation Poll on Views of Countries,” February, 2006. Available online at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_related/168.php?nid=&id=&pnt=168&lb=hmpg#India (accessed October 6, 2007). Quoted in Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive*, 176.

With hard power, both absolute and relative measures matter; the question is not merely how large an army is, but also how large the army it is going to face is, as well the quality of each army. Soft power is less adversarial and less of a zero-sum game, and clearly the message itself matters as much as how loudly it is broadcast through public diplomacy. Kurlantzick states, “Although China’s soft power rise does not depend on an American soft power decline, plummeting American appeal could contribute to China’s growing appeal.”⁶⁹ The hard power alliance formation theories of balancing and bandwagoning are well established in the international relations literature. Soft power, at least initially, forces no such choices in the target countries. Multiple countries can have high levels of soft power in a target state, and those messages can be compatible or contradictory. The people in Vietnam can admire both American and Chinese cultures. However, Kurlantzick argues that eventually, “China’s soft power could also help it push countries to decide between Washington and Beijing,” and establish a bipolar world with China as the second superpower without the need for military conflict or threats.⁷⁰

The definition of soft power established by Nye is almost certainly too narrow, while that espoused by Kurlantzick when referring to China is somewhat too broad when discussing most other countries. Nye should have acknowledged the positive role policy tools other than public diplomacy can play in building a country’s soft power. Nye points out that the United States squandered a great deal of soft power, especially in Europe, by refusing to go through the United Nations and build a broader coalition when deciding to go to war with Iraq in 2003, but fails to discuss how using military power wisely, for humanitarian missions such as tsunami relief in Indonesia or for cooperative military efforts such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, can build goodwill and soft power around the world. The use of the military remains hard power, but the way the military is used can build and enhance, not just reduce, soft power. Likewise the tit-for-tat nature of economic agreements, aid, and trade agreements between countries should remain in the hard power category, but the act of doing business or strengthening economic ties enhances soft power. Providing aid to a country in need with no strings attached may

⁶⁹ Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive*, 176.

⁷⁰ Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive*, 212.

enhance the soft power in that country and neighboring countries to the point that the donor country can obtain assistance or cooperation in the future without the need to directly or specifically call in the favor. Kurlantzick acknowledges the soft power aspects of military and especially economic interactions, but goes too far in ascribing most aspects of economic power to the soft power category. While economic policy may be more integrated in the unified Chinese government, economic aid delivered with strings attached, or specific future policy goals in mind, still belongs in the hard power category.

C. INDIAN SOFT POWER

With the early-1990s collapse of its closest ally, the Soviet Union, India was forced to reexamine its economic and foreign policies. Under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, India opened up its economy. As John Garver points out, India has traditionally viewed China as a rival at best, a threat attempting to encircle it at worst, a fear reinforced by the 1962 war, but Indian policymakers recognized how effective Chinese economic and foreign policies became in the 1990s and attempted to replicate them.⁷¹ Stephen Cohen argues “China is a model for India in how to operate in the new world order and deal with the United States.”⁷² C. Raja Mohan added,

On the diplomatic front too, India’s new foreign policy in the 1990s seemed to take after China’s realism. India’s toning down of the earlier rhetoric on non-alignment and reluctance to put itself in front of the battle against the United States and the West was very similar to China’s de-ideologization of its foreign policy during the Dengist phase.⁷³

China is viewed as the biggest potential threat to Indian advancement, but most policymakers believe that the best way to counter that threat is by emulating China’s strategy of developing allies in Asia as well as the rest of the world. Mohan further argues, “Indeed, preventing China from gaining excessive influence in India’s immediate

⁷¹ John Garver. *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*. (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001).

⁷² Stephen P. Cohen. *India: Emerging Power*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001): 44.

⁷³ C. Raja Mohan. *Crossing the Rubicon: the Shaping of India’s New Foreign Policy*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 153.

neighborhood and competing with Beijing in Southeast Asia are still among the more enduring elements of India's foreign policy."⁷⁴ Stephen Blank adds, "In the 1990s the concern that a rising China might economically and politically isolate India from Southeast Asia led Indian policymakers, influenced by world trends and ideas like the Gujral doctrine, to 'look East' even well before September 11."⁷⁵

Despite the admiration for Chinese diplomatic progress, many Indian scholars and policymakers fall much closer to the American opinion expressed by Nye that soft power is largely separate from the government's actions, is driven by the private sector—including its "economic reputation, as measured not only by size and growth but by transparency and institutional integrity"—and even that Indian soft power has grown because the government has "gotten out of the way."⁷⁶ In assessing India's soft power Nye argues,

But the real promise for China and India still lies in the future. Rapid economic growth is likely to increase both countries' hard and soft power, but at this point, neither country ranks high on the various indices of potential soft-power resources that are possessed by the United States, Europe, and Japan. While culture provides some soft power, domestic policies and values set limits... Both countries have a reputation for major corruption in government.⁷⁷

As Kurlantzick points out, China has made major strides to increase its power, while India has maintained a backseat role in driving soft power. An Indian scholar noted that,

India still has a long way to go compared to how other major countries like the US, the UK, Japan and China use cultural diplomacy as an essential tool of statecraft. China has undertaken a mammoth expansion of

⁷⁴ C. Raja Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 4 (July/August 2006): 30.

⁷⁵ Stephen J. Blank. "Natural Allies? Regional Security in Asia and Prospects for Indo-American Strategic Cooperation." Strategic Studies Institute monograph (September 2005), 67. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB626.pdf> (accessed September 2, 2007).

⁷⁶ Mira Kamdar. "'Soft Power Assets key to a Nation's Success,'" *The Times of India*, (December 22, 2005), Gurmeet Kanwal interview with the author; author's discussion with C. Raja Mohan, Singapore, 12 September 2007.

⁷⁷ Nye, *Soft Power*, 88-89.

its cultural institute named Confucius Institute with 100 branches and it has a budget of \$10 billion (Rs 45 thousand crore [in Indian numbering a crore equals 10 million]) for it.... In comparison, India has only 22 cultural centers functioning under its missions abroad.⁷⁸

Even if the Indian government made a decision to lean forward and conduct a “charm offensive” similar to China’s, the makeup of the economy and government make it far more difficult to initiate as many top-down policies. The bureaucracy in India is large and resistant to change, as illustrated by Mira Kamdar’s story.

A little over a year ago, I gave a talk in New Delhi to a group of senior Indian policy and military analysts on India’s soft-power advantage. There were many retired generals in the room... One gentleman wanted a clarification: “Soft power, then, does not mean soft country.” No, I replied, it does not.⁷⁹

While Kamdar’s anecdote illustrates the difficulty of getting some of the older policymakers to think in new ways, other scholars and policymakers are leaning forward and encouraging the country to develop soft power resources, but again driven by the private sector more than the government. One newspaper columnist noted:

What does this mean for India? It means giving attention, encouragement and active support to the aspects and products of our society that the world would find attractive—not in order directly to persuade others to support India, but rather to enhance our country’s intangible standing in their eyes. Bollywood is already doing this by bringing its brand of glitzy entertainment not just to the Indian diaspora in the US or UK but to the screens of Syrians and Senegalese—who may not understand the Hindi dialogue but catch the spirit of the films, and look at India with stars in their eyes as a result.⁸⁰

None of these sources of soft power involve government action or a specific focus on building soft power in the way China does. Indians are proud of their cultural success and reputation, and eager to leverage India’s soft power strengths in order to help the country

⁷⁸ Saurabh Shukla, “Soft Power: India’s Renewed Thrust on Cultural Diplomacy is Aimed at Showcasing its Dazzling Diversity to Maximize its Strategic Gains.” *India Today* (October 30, 2006).

⁷⁹ Mira Kamdar, *Planet India: How the Fastest-Growing Democracy is Transforming America and the World*. (New York, NY: Scribner, 2007): 284.

⁸⁰ Sashi Tharoor, “Making the Most of India’s Soft Power.” *The Times of India*, (January 28, 2007).

grow and move toward becoming a great power, but that soft power is seen as something that already exists and will naturally keep increasing rather than a public policy objective.

One of India's major sources of soft power stems from its success as a democratic nation. An often-heard refrain by proponents on both sides advocating closer ties between the United States and India has been how the world's largest democracy and the world's oldest democracy are natural partners. India's legacy as a country with a democratic tradition since its independence in 1947 (with the exception of the period of emergency under Indira Gandhi) despite dealing with poverty and many of the other issues common to post-colonial states has certainly lent it a degree of moral authority and admiration, especially among other developing countries. As one scholar in a debate put it, "India's democratic institutions have survived the test of time. India's great value is that it is the oldest receptacle of democratic values in Asia—since its inception sixty years ago."⁸¹

A second source of soft power is India's foreign policy tradition as the leader of the non-aligned movement. Throughout the rule of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, "a broad national consensus had emerged around Nehru's ideas on independent foreign policy, non-alignment, and third world solidarity."⁸² India viewed itself as a powerful nation, and one that would lead the third world in flexing its power and standing up for itself. Although in practice the policy of non alignment resulted in much closer ties to the Soviet Union and a fairly stagnant economy with a "Hindu" growth rate often under four percent—thus limiting India's progress and rise in power—the sentiment of following Nehru's wishes in attempting to help and lead the third world still serves to enhance India's soft power throughout much of the third world. Some Indian scholars argue for a return to Nehruvian policies, which might result in increased government-led efforts to build soft power. "Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru launched bold imaginative forays into global diplomacy and made the world notice, admire and

⁸¹ Majneet N. Kripalani, quoted in, "Will India Eclipse China?" Online Debate, Council on Foreign Relations, (June 7, 2007) http://www.cfr.org/publication/13525/will_india_eclipse_china.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion%2F282%2FIndia (accessed August 19, 2007).

⁸² C. Raja Mohan. "India's New Foreign Policy Strategy." Draft paper presented at a Seminar in Beijing by China Reform Forum and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (May 26, 2006).

take poor, underdeveloped and emerging India seriously for its peacemaking qualities. Nehruvian peace initiatives of the 1950s stand out for their image-burnishing value.”⁸³ Even today, when India has adopted a far more pro-Western stance than under Nehru, India has been one of the leading countries pushing for better terms for developing countries in the recent rounds of World Trade Organization negotiations.⁸⁴

India also has a store of soft power due to its religious history and current policies. India currently has the world’s second largest Muslim population, after Indonesia, and after struggles during the partition into two separate nations in 1947 has managed to live with a fair degree of harmony between the Muslim minority and Hindu majority, at least internally (with some well-publicized exceptions). This success serves as a positive role model for many countries struggling to deal with religious and ethnic minorities in an era with increasing radicalization and ethnic tensions. Additionally, India is the birthplace of Buddhism, and while Buddhists are not present in large percentages in India, many devout Buddhists feel a connection to India and travel to holy Buddhist sites, such as the birthplace of Lord Buddha himself, from countries with large Buddhist populations, including in Southeast Asia, Japan, and China.⁸⁵

A fourth factor contributing to Indian soft power is the reputation of the Indian military. India has a large military and has traditionally been very willing to send its troops all over the world for peacekeeping missions. It is currently the number two contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions.⁸⁶ Through its many peacekeeping missions the Indian military has developed a high degree of experience in counterinsurgency operations, a valued skill set in the modern world. Likewise, the Indian military has participated in humanitarian and relief operations around the world.

⁸³ Sreeram Chaulia. “India’s Soft Power: Lessons from Nehru” <http://in.news.yahoo.com/070312/43/6d5ny.html> (accessed December 12, 2007).

⁸⁴ See articles such as, Steven R. Weisman, “Package of Deals Proposed to Save Global Trade Talks.” *New York Times*, (July 18, 2007), and Elizabeth Becker and Ginger Thompson, “Poorer Nations Plead Farmers’ Case at Trade Talks.” *New York Times*, (September 11, 2003).

⁸⁵ Sudha Ramachandran. “India has its own ‘Soft Power’ – Buddhism.” *Asia Times*, (July 4, 2007) http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/IG04Df02.html (accessed September 5, 2007).

⁸⁶ “A History of Indian Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations.” Embassy of India website, http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Peace_Keeping/history_india_UN_peace_keeping.htm (accessed October 5, 2007).

As Nye himself states, “The skills and professionalism of its military are an important source of both hard and soft power for India. The impressive cooperation of the Indian and American militaries in providing relief after the Indian Ocean tsunami enhanced the soft power of both countries.”⁸⁷

One of the biggest sources of Indian soft power is the success of its economic model, especially the information technology (IT) boom that started in the late 1990s. Other developing countries want to emulate the success of the Indian economy following the economic liberalization under the Rao government, and seek greater interaction in order to duplicate the Indian success story. India has the world’s youngest population, and thus can continue a strong growth rate for many years without the bureaucracy and economy being burdened by an aging population.

A final source of Indian soft power is the large and growing popularity of Indian culture. Numerous articles on Indian soft power mention the success of the crossover hit movie *Monsoon Wedding* in the United States and elsewhere, but this is just the tip of the spear. Indian movies, including Bollywood movies, are popular throughout the world, frequently spread by the expanding Indian diaspora but usually becoming popular among the local population as well. Indian fashion, cuisine, music, and other aspects of its culture are becoming popular throughout the world.

India also faces certain weaknesses or challenges in building or maintaining its soft power, some of which are almost identical to its potential strengths. India’s economic success has not been uniform or widespread, and India currently has over 600 million people living on less than two dollars a day. Unless the economic success is spread more broadly India’s economic growth will not continue at the same rate. India’s bureaucracy dates back to the days of British rule and is bloated and inefficient, making necessary policy steps difficult to undertake. The Indian economic growth is dependent on abundant supplies of energy, a resource in which India is extremely poor, so energy and especially fossil fuel shortages could slow economic growth as well. (It is interesting to note that

⁸⁷ Joseph S. Nye, Jr. “Springing Tiger: If India can Combine its Hard and Soft Powers, it will Become a Smart Power, Having Already Passed the Test of Political Participation that China has Not.” *India Today*, (October 2, 2006).

China faces a similar energy shortfall, which is one of the drivers of China's effort to build its soft power and develop better relations with countries with energy resources.)⁸⁸ The lingering conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir is continuing to cast India in a negative and aggressive light, reducing India's soft power. Despite the relative success in maintaining good relations between Hindus and Muslims, major disagreements and religious conflicts do occur periodically, and if they were to happen and receive publicity at a time of crucial relations with an Islamic country it could reduce India's image in the world. Finally, despite the success of Indian counterinsurgency, the ongoing Maoist insurgency by the Naxalites continues to demonstrate how far India still has to come before it is a fully developed nation.⁸⁹

Indian leaders take pride in the strength of India's soft power, and view it as one of the factors helping propel the country toward major power status. One columnist noted, "The future belongs to India. Where hard power may have failed due to political reasons, it can be its soft power which may open strategic doors for India."⁹⁰ Policymakers recognize that having a positive image of India can only enhance the power they have to accomplish their objectives. However, they view soft power as something that is largely out of their hands to build and control, leaving that to the strengths of Indian society, culture, economy, and political and military reputation.

D. INDIAN SOFT POWER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

India's interests in Southeast Asia are very similar to China's: developing partners for trade and security cooperation in a region close to home. Additionally, India wants to ensure that China doesn't become too strong a presence in the region, potentially

⁸⁸ For a discussion of the drivers of China's increasing global activism see, Phillip C. Saunders, "China's Global Activism: Strategy, Drivers, and Tools." Occasional Paper, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, (October 2006), 6. For a breakdown of India's energy needs see, Vibhuti Hate, "India's Energy Dilemma." Center for Strategic and International Studies *South Asia Monitor*, No. 98 (September 7, 2006), available online at <https://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/sam98.pdf>, (accessed October 1, 2007).

⁸⁹ For a good list of factors keeping India from rising see, Lisa Curtis. "India's Expanding Role in Asia: Adapting to Rising Power Status." The Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2008 (February 20, 2007), 3.

⁹⁰ Saurabh Shukla. "Soft Power: India's Renewed Thrust on Cultural Diplomacy is Aimed at Showcasing its Dazzling Diversity to Maximize its Strategic Gains." *India Today* (October 30, 2006).

allowing them to encircle India strategically. Ashley Tellis states, “U.S. and Indian objectives and strategies vis-à-vis China, for example, are remarkably similar. Both countries are trying to protect their interests, primacy and security obligations in those critical regions where China’s rising power could pose a significant threat...”⁹¹ In the early 1990s India began what is known as the Look East policy, aimed at engaging with East and especially Southeast Asia in order to duplicate the economic success of countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. Those efforts to reach out to Southeast Asia involved both hard and soft power resources. The government-led soft power aspects included forward-leaning bilateral and multilateral diplomacy (often regarding trade), reassurances about India’s peaceful intentions, and defense cooperation. Other soft power strengths in the region include longstanding cultural ties and business relations.

Indian efforts to become a major power in the post-Cold War era included strengthening its hard power resources as well as its soft power, particularly increasing the size of the Indian Navy. This naturally led to some countries in the neighborhood feeling threatened. As one scholar notes,

Once again, possible Indian motives and its military potential to extend its reach into Southeast Asia became a subject of considerable debate. These were the circumstances that prompted policy-makers in New Delhi to make concerted moves to allay the fears in Southeast Asia... the Look East policy aimed at greater economic alignment with, and political role in, the dynamic Asia-Pacific region in general and Southeast Asia in particular, was put in place.⁹²

India’s main diplomatic efforts were to become a Dialogue Partner of ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations, a status it finally achieved at the Fifth ASEAN Summit Meeting in 1995. After gaining non-voting membership to the group, India began establishing bilateral relationships with many Southeast Asian countries, particularly

⁹¹ Ashley Tellis. “American and Indian Interests in India’s Extended Neighborhood.” University of Pennsylvania Center for the Advanced Study of India (June 26, 2007) https://casi.ssc.upenn.edu/india/lit_Tellis.html (accessed August 29, 2007).

⁹² G.V.C. Naidu. “Whither the Look East Policy: India and Southeast Asia.” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (April-June 2004): 335-6.

Malaysia and Thailand. Perhaps India's best relationship is now with Singapore. The two countries maintain an active defense and economic partnership, but the cultural exchanges are perhaps strongest of all, with many top Indian scholars, including C. Raja Mohan, studying and teaching at universities in Singapore. Singapore's foreign minister, George Yeo, stated "We see India's presence as being a beneficial and beneficent one to all of us in South-east Asia."⁹³

One major area of progress between India and Southeast Asia has been defense cooperation.

A number of confidence building measures (CBMs) that India undertook and greater appreciation of Indian maritime threats by the Southeast Asian countries created a new era of cooperation which began to transcend the naval contours. Perhaps, the most important were the joint naval exercises India started holding periodically with Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore since 1991 near the Andamans. The Chief of the Naval Staff claimed that the ships visit and communication exercises should dispel the apprehensions about any Indian ulterior motives in Southeast Asia.⁹⁴

These annual exercises in the Andaman Islands, as well as others held for the Bay of Bengal countries (India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand), serve to build habits of cooperation and goodwill between the navies and the countries themselves. In recent years the Indian Navy has played an increasingly large role in patrolling the Straits of Malacca, and has expressed an interest in international efforts to keep the seas safe and prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.⁹⁵ The Indian Navy has also garnered positive publicity and increased India's soft power through its timely and effective relief efforts rescuing refugees from Lebanon and responding to the humanitarian crisis in Indonesia following the 2006 tsunami.

⁹³ Quoted in Amit Baruah. "India has Legitimate Interests in South East Asia: George Yeo." *The Hindu* (January 24, 2007) <http://www.hindu.com/2007/01/24/stories/2007012413390100.htm> (accessed August 29, 2007).

⁹⁴ Naidu, "Whither the Look East Policy," 338.

⁹⁵ See Peter R. Lavoy and Robin Walker. "U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation." Conference Report, Center For Contemporary Conflict (April 25-26, 2007) <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jun/lavoy2Jun07.asp> (accessed October 4, 2007)

Indian efforts at enhancing business ties with Southeast Asia reflected Indian policymakers' belief that soft power primarily comes from non-governmental sources.

Parallel to its diplomatic offensive aiming at becoming a member of the ASEAN, India sought to intensify its bilateral economic relations with East Asian countries. From 1992 onward, Narasimha Rao sought closer ties with East and Southeast Asian countries by visiting them regularly. On each visit he was accompanied by an impressive delegation of businessmen: in Indonesia in 1992, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and South Korea in 1993....⁹⁶

At each stop Rao stressed the Asian values that India had in common with the target country, including Buddhism. Those visits and discussions have led to increasing trade between India and Southeast Asia, but the relationships still have a long way to go, as cumulatively Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines represent only five percent of total foreign investment by India—a significant increase from almost zero in the early 1990s, but still miniscule.⁹⁷ However, the future looks bright, as, “In the first-ever meeting of India and ASEAN economic ministers in Brunei in September 2002, the Indian trade and industry minister expressed the desire to enter into a formal agreement with ASEAN as a Regional Trade and Investment Agreement (RTIA) or a Free Trade Area (FTA) in the coming years.”⁹⁸ The agreement may be finally signed, after years of negotiations, as early as May 2008.⁹⁹

While aspects of Indian culture have also continued to be popular in various parts of Southeast Asia, it is difficult to know whether Indian culture is gaining in popularity. However, a glance at the movies playing at a Singapore or Bangkok theater in any given week reveals roughly a third of the movies are Indian in origin, catering not only to the South Asian diaspora but to Singaporeans as well.

⁹⁶ Christophe Jaffrelot, “India’s Look East Policy: An Asianist Strategy in Perspective.” *India Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April 2003), 48-9.

⁹⁷ Data from the Indian Ministry of Industry’s SIA Newsletter <http://indmin.nic.in/vsindmin/publicat/default.htm> (accessed February 26, 2008).

⁹⁸ Naidu, 342.

⁹⁹ P.S. Suryanarayana. “ASEAN-India FTA Talks Slated Again.” *The Hindu*, (September 1, 2007) <http://www.hindu.com/2007/09/01/stories/2007090156591500.htm> (accessed October 7, 2007).

Are all these efforts to increase India's soft power having an effect in Southeast Asia? A poll conducted in 2005 revealed that a majority of respondents held positive views of India's influence in the world in Indonesia, but negative opinions strongly outweighed positive ones in the Philippines. Both countries had an even more positive opinion of China, perhaps indicating the efficacy of China's soft power efforts.¹⁰⁰ Polls of other countries conducted at different periods would be extremely helpful in examining whether India's policies of allowing culture and trade to take center stage in building soft power are proving effective.

E. CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF INDIAN SOFT POWER

Scholars and policymakers agree that one of the defining factors of the coming decades will be how smoothly India and China are able to increase their power in Asia and begin to assert their power as major world powers. Mira Kamdar concludes that, "As goes India, so goes the world," and the U.S. National Intelligence Council states, "The likely emergence of China and India, as well as others, as new major global players—similar to the advent of a united Germany in the 19th century and a powerful United States in the early 20th century—will transform the geopolitical landscape, with impacts potentially as dramatic as those in the previous two centuries."¹⁰¹

China seems to have a head start in this process of becoming a great power, having embarked on a process of economic liberalization and dedicated itself to building relationships earlier and more efficiently than India. While the existence and presence of nuclear weapons makes the likelihood of military conflict between China, India, and the United States unlikely, they are and will compete for influence using the tools of soft power, especially in areas such as Southeast Asia. Joseph Nye defined soft power as the international influence a country has because others are attracted to the culture and ideas, rather than being coerced or bribed into cooperation. Joshua Kurlantzick offered a

¹⁰⁰ "Global Poll Finds Iran Viewed Negatively." BBC World Service poll, available on the World Public Opinion website, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_related/168.php?nid=&id=&pnt=168&lb=hmpg#India (accessed October 9, 2007).

¹⁰¹ Kamdar, *Planet India*, 281; National Intelligence Council. *Mapping the Global Future*. Washington, DC: Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project, (December 2004): 9.

broader definition of soft power, including explicit actions by a government to increase the reputation and power of a country. Indian policymakers have been slow to embrace this change in the nature of soft power, taking pride in the growing soft power earned by Indian culture, business, and reputation for democracy, but failing to take proactive steps to build up or utilize Indian soft power. This failure to act has left India playing catch up with China in the race for major power status. It also suggests that the new nature of soft power may be closer to Kurlantzick's definition and predictions than to Nye's original narrow view.

China's "charm offensive" policies have been so successful that it now exerts influence rivaling, and in some cases surpassing, that of the United States in Southeast Asia. The United States and India share an interest in not allowing China to dominate and potentially destabilize the region. Because of this, many U.S. policymakers assume that India is a natural and willing ally in countering a rising China, especially given the recent U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal that many in the United States feel was designed to secure India's support against China. Assuming that India is an ally would be a mistake. India has a long history of non-alignment, and its leaders have a strong realist tradition of acting only in their own interests. India is a rising major power in the region, and needs to be respected and courted for the role it can play whenever its interests do align with those of the United States. As one presenter at a conference put it:

The United States embraces India as a regional power, especially as a naval power. However, the impetus for this is not balancing or containing China, but is far wider than that. India represents an alternative, independent actor in the region, allowing other countries in the region to not have to simply choose between two countries, and avoiding a new Cold War situation between the United States and China.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Peter R. Lavoy and Robin Walker. "U.S.-India Maritime Cooperation: a Track-Two Dialogue," Conference Report, Center for Contemporary Conflict (September 18, 2007) http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/events/recent/US-IndiaMaritimeCooperation07_rpt.asp (accessed October 10, 2007).

IV. PREVENTING A NEW GREAT GAME: INDIAN AND U.S. INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

A. INTRODUCTION

For many centuries great and rising powers in the world have sought to control the resources and strategic location of Central Asia. From Alexander the Great to Genghis Khan and the Moguls through the Great Game of Imperial Russia and the British Empire in the 19th Century to the United States and Soviet Union battling in Afghanistan in the 1980s, attempts—with varying degrees of success—to influence outcomes in Central Asia have often been the mark of great powers.

However, attempts by outside powers to dominate Central Asia almost always lead to failure and often collapse of an empire. Alexander's army lost much of its strength not in battle but on the way back from India in the great desert at the present-day confluence of Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The Great Game between the British Empire and Imperial Russia signified a peak of the power of each, but also the beginning of their decline. And few people need to be told how the Soviet Union became bogged down in Afghanistan in the 1980s (with the help of massive amounts of aid from the United States), ultimately contributing to its collapse.

As India attempts to achieve great power status it too is seeking a way to be a player in the crucial region to its northwest. What are the drivers of India's interest in the region? How aggressive will it be in its efforts to influence events and gain allies in Central Asia? What tools and techniques is India using as it expands into the region? How successful will it be? Which other actors play a major role in Central Asia? This chapter will explore all of those questions, and ultimately attempt to answer the bigger question of whether India's expanded efforts in Central Asia will be compatible with the United States' interests in the region.

Ultimately this chapter will argue that the current interests of the United States and India are largely compatible regarding Central Asia. The two countries share similar goals for the Central Asian republics, and in the areas where their interests differ they are

at least not directly competing in most cases. However, the region has the potential to drive India into the arms of Russia, still the major player in the region, in order to achieve its goals, and likewise strategically drive India and the United States further apart. In order to counter that possibility the United States should work with India in areas where their goals overlap, and in the process keep India as a close strategic partner as India rises to increasing prominence in the world.

The first section of the chapter will describe the important geography and natural resources that make Central Asia so attractive to great and rising powers. The second section will examine India's relationship with Central Asia, including India's history in the region, especially regarding the former Soviet Union and Russia, and India's specific interests and goals in the region and some of the policies they are implementing in an attempt to move into Central Asia. The third section will describe the U.S. interests in, and policies toward, the region, and the final section will draw conclusions about the compatibility of current and future U.S. and Indian interests in the region.

B. NATURAL FEATURES OF CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia's importance is largely due to two factors: its strategic location and, especially in recent times, its natural resources, especially for energy production. Each of the five Central Asian republics (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan) remains relatively young and has experienced significant growing pains since they all gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The problems facing the region are significant. As former Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte stated in a report to Congress,

Central Asia remains plagued by political stagnation and repression, rampant corruption, widespread poverty, and widening socio-economic inequalities, and other problems that nurture radical sentiment and terrorism. In the worst, but not implausible, case central authority in one or more of these states could evaporate as rival clans or regions vie for

power—opening the door to an expansion of terrorist and criminal activity on the model of failed states like Somalia and, when it was under Taliban rule, Afghanistan.¹⁰³

Despite these political challenges, Central Asia’s geographic strengths ensure that it will remain important to both regional and world powers in the years and decades to come.

Located at the confluence of Asia, the Middle East (and beyond it, Africa) and Europe, Central Asia blends peoples, cultures, and influences from all directions. It was the chokepoint through which traders on the Silk Road passed for hundreds if not thousands of years, as well as armies and empires from many neighboring continents on their way to conquer or explore the wealth of far-off lands. In modern times this crucial location has meant that Central Asia is the perfect place for bases in order to conduct operations in any of the surrounding regions, including for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. As Figure 1 shows, passing through or over these countries is necessary for access from one neighboring country or region to another. Obtaining permission to use bases in, and the airspace over, Central Asia was an essential diplomatic effort prior to the U.S.-led 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, with some negotiations for air bases (such as the U.S.-Uzbek Status of Forces Agreement, which negotiated use of the Karshi-Khanabad, or “K2” airbase) completed mere hours before operations started.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ John D. Negroponte. “Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence,” (February 2, 2006).

¹⁰⁴ Robert St. Tripp, Kristin F. Lynch, John G.. Drew, and Edward W. Chan. *Supporting Air and Space Expeditionary Forces: Lessons from Operation Enduring Freedom*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, (2004) http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/MR1819.pdf (accessed March 3, 2008). See also, Jim Nichol. “Uzbekistan’s Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad: Context and Implications.” Washington, DC: CRS Report for Congress, (March 29, 2006).



Figure 2. Map of Southwest Asia [From MyTravelGuide.com].¹⁰⁵

Central Asia's other main reason for importance is its extensive energy resources. Three of the countries, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, have extensive proven petroleum reserves, with U.S. Department of Energy estimates showing them collectively as roughly comparable to Oman, and have the potential for even more oil and natural gas discoveries.¹⁰⁶

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have some of the world's largest uranium resources, which are coveted by existing and emerging countries seeking nuclear power for either

¹⁰⁵ Southwest Asia Map @ MyTravelGuide.com. <http://www.mytravelguide.com/travel-tools/maps/Southwest-Asia-map.php> (accessed January 10, 2008).

¹⁰⁶ "Country Analysis Briefs: Central Asia." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, February 7, 2006 <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Centasia/pdf.pdf>, (accessed January 11, 2008).

energy production or potentially nuclear weapons. “Major customers for Kazakhstan’s yellow cake [low enriched uranium] have included the United States and Europe. Kazakhstan’s Ulba fuel fabrication facility provides nuclear fuel pellets to Russia and other NIS [newly independent states].”¹⁰⁷

Water is also extremely important to the region. Two major rivers, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, flow through the region, providing the potential for a large amount of hydroelectric power, especially for the upstream states of Kyrgystan and Tajikistan. Much as the oil resources are difficult to export, creating the infrastructure—in this case the power grid—to transport the energy through the surrounding countries to potential energy customers such as India faces difficult challenges. Additionally, because building dams would enable the upstream states to control the flow of water, their construction has been strongly opposed, and the potential remains for water to be a source of conflict in Central Asia.¹⁰⁸

Despite the natural resources available in these countries, extracting the energy from this volatile region has proved to be difficult; various major powers in the region are advocating and building pipelines that are most advantageous to them. In addition to the influence of outside players, the difficulties are increased because of the region’s mountainous terrain and the political unrest and conflict among and between various countries in the region.

C. INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

1. India’s History with Central Asia

Until 1991 the Central Asian states were part of the Soviet Union. Because of this longstanding history Russia remains one of the most important actors in Central Asia. As the Soviet Union’s “non-aligned, aligned” ally, India’s main connection to Central Asia

¹⁰⁷ Jim Nichol. “Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests.” Congressional Research Service, Report for Congress, (April 26, 2007): CRS-19.

¹⁰⁸ For a more thorough discussion of the potential for water conflict in Central Asia see Adam Radin. *The Security Implications of Water: Prospects for Violence and Instability over Water Resources*. Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, (2008).

during the Cold War was with the Soviet leaders and advisors in the region.¹⁰⁹ Throughout the Cold War India's great power ambitions were relatively muted due to lack of resources for a more ambitious agenda, and thus its interest in Central Asia was primarily confined to simple security interests. As C. Raja Mohan noted, "India's policy towards Afghanistan and Central Asia demonstrated the dichotomy between its aspirations for a larger role in the north-western neighbourhood and the real constraints on it."¹¹⁰ India's main goal in joining the Soviet Union in its engagement in Central Asia was to enable it to potentially attack Pakistan from multiple sides. India actively sought an alliance with Afghanistan so that Pakistan would have to defend both borders and could not concentrate its defense in only one direction. They were fairly successful at maintaining this arrangement, with help from the Soviet Union, until the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979. With the help of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, the mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan successfully drove out the Soviet army and forged a new closer relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan based on a Muslim identity. This strong religious identity continued once the Soviet Union withdrew, ultimately leading to the Taliban government ruling Afghanistan.¹¹¹ As the *Asia Times* reported,

Despite India's proximity to Afghanistan, and its historical links to the area, India was pretty much out of the scene following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Following the US invasion of Afghanistan in the winter of 2001, India re-energized itself and began to participate in Afghanistan for its own economic and security benefits, and with a view to keeping Pakistan out.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ In private discussions numerous South Asian scholars have referred to India as having been the Soviet Union's "non-aligned, aligned ally" during the Cold War, including Gurmeet Kanwal and Feroz Hassan Khan.

¹¹⁰ C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: the Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 217-8.

¹¹¹ For an excellent and detailed discussion of the dynamics in Afghanistan from the 1970s through the 1990s see Steve Coll. *Ghost Wars: the Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Ladin, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. New York, NY: Penguin Press, (2004).

¹¹² Ramtanu Maitra. "India's Irons in the Afghan Fire." *Asia Times Online*, (October 26, 2004) http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/FJ26Df04.html (accessed January 25, 2008).

Both India and Russia opposed the Taliban rule, since it largely resulted in a loss of the strategically important Afghanistan, and even after the Cold War have continued to work together in the region. India and Russia both backed the Northern Alliance of tribes fighting against the Taliban even before the U.S.-led coalition attacked the country in response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. One of their main avenues for India's aid to the Northern Alliance was through bases in Tajikistan, where India operated a 25-bed field hospital for wounded Northern Alliance soldiers near Fakhor.¹¹³ Following the fall of the Taliban the Indian government quickly moved to build on the goodwill it had built up through years of assistance to the Northern Alliance. India has close ties to Afghani President Hamid Karzai, who studied in India, and has provided significant aid toward the reconstruction of Afghanistan, including,

...Schools for Afghan children and hospitals for Afghan women; Indian buses by the hundreds ply Kabul's streets; and the national airline Ariana is being resurrected thanks to a free gift from India - three airbuses. India is also building roads in western Afghanistan and repairing dams in the eastern part of the country.¹¹⁴

This trend of moving into Afghanistan and Central Asia should continue for at least the next several years, as, "India and Russia are likely to continue cooperating on a range of policies, balancing Chinese influence in the region and also countering Islamist extremist elements flowing from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran."¹¹⁵ India's main goal in Central Asia and Afghanistan historically was, with the help of the Soviet Union or Russia, to open up a second front for Pakistan and ensure Indian security. Now, as it has gained resources, India is able to embrace more ambitious interests, goals, and policies toward Central Asia.

¹¹³ Rahul Bedi. "India Joins anti-Taliban Coalition." *Jane's*, (March 15, 2001). http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/jir/jir010315_1_n.shtml (accessed January 22, 2008).

¹¹⁴ Ramtanu Maitra, "India's Irons in the Afghan Fire."

¹¹⁵ Stephen P. Cohen. *India: Emerging Power*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, (2002): 252.

2. India's Central Asian Interests and Policies

India's main interests in Central Asia can be divided into two broad categories: defensive and offensive. On the defensive side it wants to protect itself from any threats that may either originate in Central Asia or try to pass through Central Asia and threaten India's Northwest flank. At the same time India is interested in quickly expanding its influence in the region in order to take advantage of the natural resources and strategic location that makes Central Asia so attractive to so many great powers. In many cases these goals are mutually reinforcing, since India moving into Central Asia and having a greater presence will provide a buffer and prevent threats from rising in the region.

The prospect of rising militant Islam in Central Asia is an extremely scary one for India, as it is for most other bordering countries. If terrorist cells grow and become established they, or their message, can easily spread to India through Afghanistan and Pakistan, exacerbating existing problems within India. Radical Islam is difficult to eradicate or even reduce, especially for an outside power, as both the Soviet Union in the 1980s and the United States in the current age found in Afghanistan. Promoting democracy may help, and India has some experience working to promote democracy, but democracy promotion now has a certain stigma after U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. India's relationship with Russia may help in counter-terrorism operations in Central Asia, although the goals and methods employed by each country often vary widely.

India also has a vested interest in keeping any other great power from dominating the region, particularly China, but also Russia. The Chinese are long-time allies of Pakistan—as well as rivals of India—and any increase in Chinese activity in the region is typically viewed as threatening by New Delhi, especially since the creation of the Chinese-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).¹¹⁶ Former U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan R. Grant Smith stated that,

¹¹⁶ The Government of India's 2006 Ministry of Defence Annual Report understatedly notes that "China's military modernization, with sustained double digit growth in its defence budget for over a decade, as also development of infrastructure in the India-China border areas continues to be monitored." *Annual Report 2005-6*, New Delhi: Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 2006: 10.

India cannot ignore how close Central Asia is to north India, with Dushanbe and Tashkent both closer to New Delhi than Madras. India does not want hostile bases there, and friendly bases could be useful in a conflict with Pakistan and, conceivably, China.¹¹⁷

The first of these Indian bases in Central Asia—or indeed, anywhere outside of India—is an airbase at the Farkhor facility at Ayni, Tajikistan, near the capital Dushanbe, where the Indian Air Force (IAF) has based a fleet of MiG-29 fighter planes, as well as possibly a squadron of Mi-17 helicopters.¹¹⁸ Official Indian government sources have been tight-lipped about the base, but Indian and foreign press reports about the base go back to at least the early 2000s, with reports that the deal was signed in 2003.¹¹⁹ The base started off as a field hospital for Indian personnel to treat Afghan Northern Alliance fighters in their struggle against the Taliban, and is built on the location of an old Soviet airbase used during the campaign against Afghanistan during the 1980s.

The establishment of the base represents a major step for India's movement into Central Asia, as well as a small affront to Chinese efforts to expand influence into the region as Russian influence declines. Stephen Blank noted that,

Although both India and Pakistan are observers in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China is undoubtedly wary of the Indian presence at Ayni. Moreover, Indian policy intellectuals continue to view China as a strategic rival in Central Asia, as well as closer to home. Thus, India's power-projection ambitions are in a certain sense directed toward China.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ R. Grant Smith. "Central Asia, the United States, and India: Looking Ahead." Unpublished paper presented at *U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation* conference in New Delhi, India, (April 2007). Part of a forthcoming publication from an Indian publisher.

¹¹⁸ "IAF to station MiG-29s in Tajikistan." *The Times of India*, (April 20, 2006). <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1498063.cms> (accessed January 22, 2008).

¹¹⁹ "India has Acknowledged Establishing an Air Base in Tajikistan," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, Vol. 157, Iss. 9 (August 26, 2002); Gulshan Luthra. "India to Base Planes in Tajikistan: Engineers Working to Strengthen Runway." *Tribune India* (November 15, 2003) <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2003/20031115/main1.htm> (accessed March 3, 2008).

¹²⁰ Stephen Blank. "The New Central Asian Player." *Transitions Online*, July 10, 2006. <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=174&NrSection=2&NrArticle=17375> (accessed January 30, 2008).

The Indian government has likewise remained quiet about the exact size, nature, or goals of the airbase, and reports vary as to how substantial it is, with some Indian scholars at the April 2007 *U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation* conference in New Delhi suggesting reports about the airbase emerge largely from Moscow and are overblown.¹²¹ Nevertheless, as India's first military base in another country, and first foothold in Central Asia, it represents a significant step in Indian strategy. The base is located very near the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border, and has served as a significant staging point for bringing reconstruction materials into Afghanistan. Additionally Farkhor Air Base is both close to main staging grounds for militant Islamic jihadist groups that could spread to India, and to locations "where Pakistan and China are engaged in massive military cooperation."¹²² Finally, the base, and any like it that may be built in the future, would allow the Indian Air Force to flank Pakistan and potentially attack from multiple directions in the event of another event like the 1999 Kargil crisis, or even a larger war.

Of course in addition to its military or security interests India also has important economic interests in Central Asia. These interests are primarily in Central Asia's energy wealth. India is energy-poor, and its energy needs are large and growing exponentially as its economy continues to expand. India's oil consumption doubled between 1992 and 2005—up to 2.5 million barrels per day—and is likely to double again by 2030 if not sooner. It produces only a quarter of the oil it uses, and is the world's ninth largest oil importer, with demand expected to grow at 2.9-5 percent per year.¹²³ This energy demand has the potential to cripple the Indian economy if it is not secured, so Indian

¹²¹ Peter R. Lavoy and Robin Walker, "Conference Report: U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation." *Strategic Insights*, Center for Contemporary Conflict, (April 25-26, 2007) <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jun/lavoy2Jun07.asp> (accessed January 30, 2008).

¹²² Sudha Ramachandran, "India's Foray into Central Asia," *Asia Times*, (August 12, 2006) http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HH12Df01.html (accessed January 11, 2008).

¹²³ See Tanvi Madan, "Energy Security Series: India," Washington, DC: *The Brookings Institution*, (November 2006) http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2006/11india_fixauthornam/2006india.pdf (accessed January 30, 2008); "Integrated Energy Policy: Report of the Expert Committee," New Delhi, India: Government of India Planning Commission, (August 2006). http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/rep_intengvy.pdf (accessed January 30, 2008); and "India's Energy Dilemma," Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies *South Asia Monitor*, (September 7, 2006) <http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/sam98.pdf> (accessed January 30, 2008).

energy needs are a strategic concern as well. While the Middle East still represents the world's largest and easiest source of hydrocarbons, extracting and transporting the oil and gas to India has faced logistical and political difficulties. (The roadblocks surrounding the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) natural gas pipeline will be explored in the next chapter.) These difficulties make the energy potential of Central Asia all the more attractive. As Smith put it,

Among India's specific interests in Central Asia, energy stands out. India needs Central Asian hydrocarbons and electricity—Turkmenistan's gas, Kazakhstan's oil and thermal electric generating capacity, and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan's very large hydroelectric potential. None of these is well developed yet, so the possibilities for India are substantial. The task is for the Indian government or Indian companies to obtain a commitment for a share of the reserves, where possible, and to be involved in their processing and transmission, and for the Indian government to insure that they flow to India.¹²⁴

The logistical difficulties of building pipelines or high-capacity electrical wires across difficult terrain and often-unfriendly neighbors are not insignificant. The longstanding ties to Russia mean that most of the existing and proposed pipelines take the oil and gas north and west. India needs to act quickly in order to overcome the political and logistical difficulties with bringing the energy to the subcontinent.

India is interested in gaining a stronger foothold and more influence in Central Asia in order to protect itself, enrich itself, and prevent other powers from accomplishing those goals without taking Indian interests into account. India wants to counter the potential for terrorist groups to grow in Central Asia, prevent Russia or China from becoming a great power that dominates India's backyard, and potentially attack Pakistan from multiple angles should another conflict arise. In addition India wants at least a share of the resources, especially energy, in this developing region while preventing any other power from dominating them. The other rising powers in the region share many of the same goals, but the result could be cooperation or conflict, depending on how each side plays its hand.

¹²⁴ R. Grant Smith, "Central Asia, the United States, and India: Looking Ahead." 5.

D. U.S. INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

For most of the 1990s the United States' interest in Central Asia was minimal. Even after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan its attention to the five Central Asian republics is mostly tangential and due to their proximity to other, more important countries—whether allies like Turkey or former or potential adversaries like Afghanistan and Iran—than for their own value. As simply stated, the United States' interests in Central Asia are, “fostering democratization, human rights, free markets, and trade; assisting the development of oil and other resources; and combating terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and drug production and trafficking.”¹²⁵ In other words, the United States is primarily interested in Central Asia for strategic reasons since, as analyst Amy Jaffe argues, Caspian energy, “hardly seems worth the risks” of an enhanced U.S. presence in Central Asia.¹²⁶

Of course the United States is interested in where the energy goes. This means both that it wants to prevent any one country, such as Russia, from dominating the source, and that it wants to make sure the oil and natural gas go toward its allies and away from its enemies. Stephen Blank stated that,

In other words, energy access, though important, is not and should not be the primary driver of U.S. policy here.... The driving force behind U.S. policy is anti-monopoly, while the driving force behind Moscow and Beijing's policies is quintessentially monopolistic in nature.¹²⁷

This has meant that the United States has favored pipelines that ship Central Asian oil westward through ally Turkey, and opposed any pipelines that require transporting oil south through Iran. The Central Asian states recognize the bind they are in, and want to have as many options for exporting their oil as possible. Supporting pipelines such as the

¹²⁵ Jim Nichol. “Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests.” Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Report for Congress (April 26, 2007).

¹²⁶ Amy Jaffe. “Kazakhstan Unlikely to be Major Source of Oil for the United States,” GAO, March 1994. Quoted in Nichol, “Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests.”

¹²⁷ Stephen J. Blank. “U.S. Interests in Central Asia and the Challenges to them,” Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, (March 2007): 3.

proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline (TAP) would serve both of the United States' regional energy goals: preventing Russia and China from dominating the energy market in the region, and channeling the energy to an ally. Although the proposed pipeline faces large political and logistical difficulties of difficult terrain and potentially hostile people controlling the territory where the pipeline would run, it would be in the interests of both India and the United States to build the TAP pipeline.

One of the United States' main interests in Central Asia is in preventing the growth and spread of terrorism. Additionally it hopes to promote democracy in the region. Unfortunately the drawn-out wars with Afghanistan and Iraq have tarnished the United States' reputation at doing either in Central Asia. Additionally, both Russia and China oppose a significant U.S. presence in the region, and have spread rumors that the CIA and the West in general are attempting to instigate "color revolutions" and overthrow the ruling governments.¹²⁸ This has severely tarnished the reputation of the United States in the region, with some fairly severe consequences. The United States still relies on air bases in the region to help channel essential supplies for the two wars, and the loss of the use of the K2 airbase in Uzbekistan has hurt that effort greatly. In Uzbekistan especially the United States has little say and has largely been pushed out by Russia, China, and the Uzbek government itself.¹²⁹ India still has a relatively good reputation in the region, both as a democracy and as a country opposing terror. Gulshan Sachdeva states that, "In Central Asia, India will be expected to play its role as a balancer in the backdrop of increasing Chinese dominance and declining Russian presence."¹³⁰ Since both the United States and India share goals of opposing terrorism and promoting security, stability, and democracy, the United States should, wherever possible, work with India to accomplish those goals, especially in countries where the United States' reputation has been tarnished.

¹²⁸ Blank, "U.S. Interests in Central Asia and the Challenges to them." 14.

¹²⁹ Jim Nichol, "Uzbekistan's Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad: Context and Implications."

¹³⁰ Gulshan Sachdeva. "India's Attitude Towards China's Growing Influence in Central Asia," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Volume 4, No. 3, (2006). 26.

E. CONCLUSION

Central Asia continues to play an important role in the world, both as a region of strategic importance and as a potential source of desirable and lucrative energy resources. It is also a volatile region, surrounded by four nuclear weapons powers (Russia, China, India, and Pakistan), bordering Afghanistan, home to several brutal regimes, and a breeding ground for militant Islamist groups. The three potential great powers bordering the region, and the world's only current superpower, all have strong interests in influencing—and if possible controlling or dominating—the region in order to reduce threats and control the energy resources.

India's interests in Central Asia are the same as the other major regional powers, but are made more pressing due to its longstanding conflict with Pakistan, and its pressing need for reliable sources of energy. It has historically had good relations with Central Asia in part due to its close relationship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, as well as efforts to help the Northern Alliance in its fight against the Taliban in Afghanistan. New Delhi is now pursuing a more aggressive policy in an effort to gain a foothold in the region, including building India's first overseas base, in Tajikistan. The base allows India to project power forward into Central Asia, as well as backward in the event of another active conflict with Pakistan. Ultimately those goals are quite important to India, and it will probably be willing to invest significant resources into increasing its influence in Central Asia in the coming years.

India has one of the largest militaries in the world, but is still just dipping its toes into the water in terms of using hard military power to enhance its global position. Although India is actively increasing its military capabilities, including through exercises with Japan, Singapore, the United States, and other countries, it has so far not used those capabilities to project power very far afield. The Ayani airbase represents India's first major step at permanently projecting its hard power beyond its borders. If the experiment is successful it may expand that effort in the future, but at present India's hard power is growing slowly.

The United States' primary interests in Central Asia are to promote security and stability and prevent the region from becoming unstable and threatening. Part of that goal is promoting democracy. As a secondary goal that will hopefully promote stability the United States seeks economic development, including of energy resources, for the region. Unfortunately its reputation has been tarnished both by its own recent military actions and by a campaign by Russia and China to discredit the United States. Additionally, as a region more important for what it is adjacent to than of its own right, the United States does not consider Central Asia worthy of the investment of significant resources or political capital to achieve its goals. Thus, a partnership with another country with similar goals would be advantageous to the United States, and help it accomplish its security, stability, and development goals for the region.

India has so far acted largely unilaterally in its efforts to gain influence in Central Asia, but is fighting an uphill battle against China and Russia, who have significant head starts. It would likely embrace any potential ally that shared its interests for the region—as long as that country did not represent a potential threat. Because of the two countries' history together, Russia might be a natural ally for India in the region if it would be willing to support meeting India's energy needs from the region by helping to build pipelines and electric infrastructure.

The United States and India each have much to gain from working together to meet their similar goals in Central Asia. The United States would gain because India has a more vested interest in the region and will probably be willing to invest more resources into suppressing and rooting out potential terrorist organizations. Additionally, India retains a better reputation in the region, especially regarding democracy building, and could act in good faith toward that goal. In return the United States would probably have to be willing to support and possibly even assist with the building of infrastructure and deals in order to get Central Asian energy through to India. If the two countries do not work together India will be tempted to either pursue its regional agenda on its own or work more closely with Russia, potentially forcing the United States to either invest significantly more resources on its own or risk losing any influence in this strategic region.

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V. NUCLEAR HIJINKS: INDIA, IRAN, THE UNITED STATES, AND NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS

We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program; we also assess with moderate-to-high confidence that Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons.

--National Intelligence Estimate: "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities"¹³¹

A. INTRODUCTION

Iran has presented a difficult challenge for the United States' foreign policymakers for many years. While the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate reversed the U.S. government's opinion from 2005 and declared that Iran had at least temporarily halted its quest for nuclear weapons due to international pressure, it also stated that Iranian leaders still probably want to acquire nuclear weapons at some point. U.S. efforts to negotiate with Iran on a bilateral basis have proved to be less than ideal, and the United States has attempted to seek out allies with some degree of influence over Iran in order to place multilateral pressure on Tehran and meet its primary goal of preventing a radically anti-U.S. country in a volatile region from becoming a nuclear weapons power.

India is one of the key allies the United States has sought out in its quest to prevent Iranian proliferation. India has historically had fairly close relations with Iran, partially due to both countries having had conflicts or disagreements with Pakistan. Additionally India has one of the 35 crucial votes on the Board of Governors at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—which votes on whether to send punitive action proposals on Iran and other nuclear violators to the United Nations' Security Council—and carries a lot of weight and influence as one of the countries with nuclear weapons on the board.

¹³¹ National Intelligence Council. "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities." National Intelligence Estimate, Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council, (November 2007) http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf (accessed February 12, 2008).

India, however, has not proved to be an easy or overly willing ally for the United States regarding Iran. As a non-signatory of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), India felt ostracized by the international community and faced sanctions following its May 1998 nuclear tests, and harbors some sympathy for other countries that want to protect themselves through nuclear weapons. Additionally, India is extremely energy hungry, and wants to stay in Iran's good graces with the hopes of completing a proposed natural gas pipeline across Pakistan and into India. One argument made at least implicitly regarding the U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal is that it would buy, or at least rent, India's allegiance in the IAEA votes regarding Iran, which proved partly true even when the nuclear deal negotiations were in their infancy when India surprisingly voted with the United States in 2005.¹³²

This chapter will explore India's interests vis-à-vis Iran, and will attempt to explain whether, or under what circumstances, India can be counted on as an ally in helping the United States contain Iran's nuclear ambitions or other potentially threatening actions. The first section will examine India's interests in Iran, with special emphasis on the proposed natural gas pipeline. The second section will briefly explain the United States' interests regarding Iran, focusing on the efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. The third section will explore some of the dynamics surrounding the U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal, especially as it influenced the IAEA votes. The fourth and final section will draw conclusions about the likelihood of India's cooperation in containing Iran in the future.

The chapter's main argument will be that India will be a reliable ally regarding Iran only as long as the United States continues to sweeten the pot for India. Each vote or action on India's part will be a struggle and will require additional persuasion from the

¹³² One recent report, among many, stated that, "In a talk on 'Iran, North Korea and the future of the NPT' at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Stephen G. Rademaker — who quit his job as Assistant Secretary for Nonproliferation and International Security at the U.S. State Department last December — said the July 2005 nuclear agreement had helped bring about a big change in India's attitude towards 'non-proliferation.' 'The best illustration of this is the two votes India cast against Iran at the IAEA,' he said, adding: 'I am the first person to admit that the votes were coerced.'" Siddharth Varadarajan. "India's anti-Iran votes were coerced, says former U.S. official." *The Hindu*, (February 16, 2007) <http://www.thehindu.com/2007/02/16/stories/2007021605671200.htm> (accessed February 14, 2008).

United States. India's actions will be based on a realist assessment of the interests at stake at that time, and gaining India's long-term allegiance will prove to be difficult if not impossible.

B. INDIA'S INTERESTS IN IRAN

The people of the Indian subcontinent share what is often described as a "civilizational relationship" with the Iranian or Persian people. In modern times this has resulted in fairly close ties between India and Iran. India's interests regarding Iran are largely based on these historical ties, mutual disagreement with Pakistan, its role as a leader of the non-aligned movement, and its quest for energy resources.

1. Historical Relationship and a Mutual Enemy

Indian-Iranian ties go back many centuries. The Aryan people who dominate India, especially Northern India, passed through Iran on the way to the subcontinent. Despite current religious differences, the cultural and linguistic ties remain. For example the word Hind, which became Hindu and Hindi, is a word describing the land around the Indus River by ancient Persians. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs noted that, "India and Iran share centuries of close cultural & civilizational affinities. The two neighbouring civilizations (from the times of the Achaemenian, Sassanian, Maurya and Gupta empires) have influenced each other in the fields of culture, art, architecture and language."¹³³ Jawaharlal Nehru stated that, "Few people have been more closely related in origin and throughout history than the people of India and the people of Iran."¹³⁴

Both India and Iran have felt threatened by Pakistan. Although many in Pakistan embraced the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979, the Sunni-Shia differences between Iran and Pakistan enforced the distrust, especially once Wahhabi-dominated Saudi Arabian money began flowing into Pakistan for the fight in Afghanistan. Once Pakistan declared

¹³³ Ministry of External Affairs. "India-Iran Relations," New Delhi, India: Ministry of External Affairs, (August, 2006) <http://www.meaindia.nic.in/> (accessed February 16, 2008).

¹³⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*. As quoted in "India & Iran – Age Old Ties," Embassy of India, Tehran <http://www.indianembassy-tehran.com/india-iran-links.html> (accessed February 16, 2008).

itself a nuclear power, and especially a Muslim nuclear power to balance out the “Hindu” and “Jewish” nuclear weapons, Iranian leaders saw the need for a Shia nuclear weapon to balance out the Sunni bomb.

India was one of the founding members and remains a leader of the non-aligned movement. Additionally India was the first non-signer of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) to develop and publicly test a nuclear weapon (with the probable exception of Israel), with the “peaceful nuclear explosion” in 1974. Although India does not want the added complication of another nuclear weapons country in its backyard, it does harbor some sympathy for another country trying to buck the established system, and certainly supports Iran’s right to develop nuclear power technology. One India scholar wrote that the United States’ pressure on Iran was “illegal” and that the IAEA statute in question “explicitly rules out the Agency doing anything that might hamper Iran’s technological development in the field of peaceful nuclear activities.”¹³⁵ Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh stated that, “We have traditional good relations with Iran. We expect Iran will fulfill all of its obligations with regard to the NPT.”¹³⁶ It is in India’s strong interest not to have another potential nuclear-armed state in its backyard, but it is also in India’s interest not to alienate Iran. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs conveniently solved this problem by removing Iran from the countries it lists as neighbors in its annual report.¹³⁷

In September 1993 Indian Prime Minister Narisimha Rao made the first visit to Iran by an Indian leader since the 1979 revolution. Since then relations have gotten even closer, resulting in a visit to India by Iranian President Mohammed Khatami, who signed

¹³⁵ Siddharth Varadarajan. “India, Iran and the Nuclear Challenge: India Sides with the U.S. in the Illegal Pressure on Iran.” *The Hindu* (January 16, 2006) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=VAR20060116&articleId=1729> (accessed March 4, 2008).

¹³⁶ Condoleezza Rice. “Remarks with Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh.” U.S. Department of State (March 16, 2005) <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/43490.htm> (accessed March 3, 2008).

¹³⁷ This point was clearly made by an Indian presenter at the April 2007 U.S.-India Strategic Partnership, who noted, “According to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, ‘India can’t allow another nuclear state in the neighborhood.’ This problem was solved by re-writing India’s reports to list Iran as a non-neighboring country!” Peter R. Lavoy and Robin Walker. “Conference Report: U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation.” Center for Contemporary Conflict, April 25-26, 2007 <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jun/lavoy2Jun07.asp> (accessed February 4, 2008).

the New Delhi Declaration, signaling the launching of a “strategic partnership” in January 2003. The two countries are trying to bring about closer ties in several areas, and have bilateral working groups on hydrocarbons, commerce, transportation, agriculture, rural development, industries, culture, technology, consular affairs, drug trafficking, power, and telecommunications.¹³⁸

2. Quest for Energy and the IPI Pipeline

As was the case with Central Asia, one of the major factors influencing India’s relations with Iran is its need for increasing energy from petroleum resources. The Ministry of External Affairs notes that in 2004-5 (the most recent year listed) Iranian crude oil imports by India accounted for U.S. \$2.47 billion, or about 32 percent of India’s total crude oil imports.¹³⁹ This figure has probably increased rapidly in more recent years, as India seeks the fuel to keep its economy growing, and India imports significant amounts of natural gas from Iran as well. India would like to import a much larger quantity of natural gas, preferably through a pipeline passing through Pakistan.

The roughly 2,700 kilometer India-Pakistan-Iran (IPI) “peace” pipeline, which was first proposed in 1989 and is expected to cost around U.S.\$7 billion, would supply natural gas to both India and Pakistan from the South Pars natural gas field (see Figure 1). The pipeline could serve as a confidence building measure between India and Pakistan, since both would have to cooperate, and balance out the leverage India has by controlling the strategic headwaters of rivers flowing into Pakistan.

¹³⁸ Ministry of External Affairs. “India-Iran Relations.”

¹³⁹ Ibid.



Figure 3. Proposed IPI Pipeline Route [From Calamur “Analysis: IPI Faces Dangers, Hurdles”]¹⁴⁰

Several issues remain to be decided before the pipeline can go through, including the price to be paid for the gas, the transit fees that Pakistan would get, India’s fears about having the gas pass through Pakistan—especially the largely lawless area of Baluchistan—and of course the actual building of the pipeline.

Additionally the United States opposes the proposed pipeline because it says the deal would allow Iran to broaden its market and undermine international efforts to isolate Iran. Secretary of State Rice expressed concern about the proposed deal during her March

¹⁴⁰ Krishnadev Calamur. “Analysis: IPI Faces Dangers, Hurdles,” *Energy Daily*, (January 31, 2007). http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Analysis_IPI_faces_dangers_hurdles_999.html. (accessed February 17, 2008).

2005 visit to India, but no U.S. official has so far directly stated that it would be a violation of ILSA, the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act.¹⁴¹

The IPI pipeline has faced many delays since it was first proposed, and the challenges that remain are significant, so saying it will be built soon may be premature. Once a deal is reached it will take at least four years to complete the pipeline, but a deal now seems closer than ever. The Pakistani political opposition that dominated the government in the 1990s under Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif has diminished, and if the numbers can be worked out the pipeline is in the interest of all three countries involved. India would gain an additional source of the energy it needs so badly, Pakistan would gain a source of energy, transit fees for the natural gas that heads to India, and the stability that comes with potential leverage over India in the event of another crisis, and Iran would gain more contact with the outside world and a major new purchaser of its energy. As an added complicating factor, China has now stepped up and said it would be eager and willing to either join in the project or step in if India backs out.¹⁴² This adds to China's increasing activity in Pakistan, including the financing and building of a major port facility close to the Strait of Hormuz at Gwadar. Either way a deal should be reached soon to export natural gas east from Iran.

C. U.S. INTERESTS IN IRAN

In his 2002 State of the Union address President George W. Bush declared that Iran was part of an "Axis of Evil," stating that, "Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom."¹⁴³ In keeping with the nature of that speech, the key elements of the United States' Iran policy are stopping Iran from getting weapons of mass destruction (WMD),

¹⁴¹ K. Alan Kronstadt and Kennety Katzman. "India-Iran Relations and U.S. Interests," Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Report for Congress, (August 2, 2006).

¹⁴² Ruth David. "Iran Waves China Card at India on Pipeline Project," *Forbes.com*, (February 13, 2008) http://www.forbes.com/markets/2008/02/13/iran-india-china-markets-comm-cx_rd_0213markets2.html?partner=topix. (accessed February 17, 2008).

¹⁴³ The White House. "President Delivers State of the Union Address," Washington, DC: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, (January 29, 2002) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html> (accessed February 18, 2008).

stopping terrorist activities, and pursuing regime change in Iran through democratization. Of these, the most immediate and pressing goal is preventing Iran from obtaining WMD, especially nuclear weapons.

As a signer of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) Iran has a right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful, energy-generating purposes. However, as one of the world's largest producers of oil and natural gas Iran is very energy rich and does not need nuclear power for its energy potential, and its nuclear program is largely seen as intended to lead to nuclear weapons. An earlier National Intelligence Estimate reported in 2005 that Iran could be only ten years away from a functional nuclear weapon—although the 2007 NIE revised that assessment and stated that Iran had suspended its program in 2003—and in October 2007 the United States declared that Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps was a proliferator of weapons of mass destruction and imposed additional sanctions under Executive Order 13382.¹⁴⁴

Both the United States and the international community have tried several steps to encourage Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions. The United States and the IAEA have both imposed various sanctions and resolutions on Iran, with varying measures of success. The IAEA and United Nations resolutions have often lacked teeth, especially due to lack of support from key countries including Russia, China, and France. The two most significant, UN Security Council resolutions 1737 and 1747, “ban weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-related trade with Iran, freeze the assets of Iran's nuclear and related entities and personalities, prevent Iran from transferring arms outside Iran, and require reporting on international travel by named Iranians.”¹⁴⁵ Although the United States intelligence community now believes that Iran placed its nuclear program on hold, U.S.

¹⁴⁴ Dafna Linzer. “Iran is Judged 10 Years from Nuclear Bomb: U.S. Intelligence Review Contrasts with Administration Statements.” *Washington Post*, (August 2, 2005) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/01/AR2005080101453.html> (accessed February 13, 2008); Treasury Department. “Fact Sheet: Designation of Iranian Entities and Individuals for Proliferation Activities and Support for Terrorism,” Washington, DC: U.S. Treasury Department, (October 25, 2007) <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/hp644.htm> (accessed February 13, 2008); The White House. “Executive Order: Blocking Property of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators and their Supporters,” Washington, DC: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, (June 29, 2005) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/06/20050629.html> (accessed February 13, 2008).

¹⁴⁵ Kenneth Katzman. “Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses,” Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, (January 30, 2008).

policymakers remain wary of Iran's intentions and capabilities. In March 2008, Security Council Resolution 1803 added more names and organizations to those in Iran under sanction for developing nuclear weapons technology.¹⁴⁶

The United States also believes that Iran is one of the major state sponsors of terrorism in the world, with ties to Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and the Taliban insurgency, among others. A major fear is that if Iran developed weapons of mass destruction it might be tempted to pass them to one or more terrorist groups for potential deployment against the United States or other targets.

Because of the concerns over the nuclear program and connections to terrorist groups, and also because Iran does not have formal relations with the United States and does not recognize Israel's right to exist, the United States maintains a policy of advocating regime change in Iran. In his 2006 State of the Union Address President George W. Bush stated that,

The same is true of Iran, a nation now held hostage by a small clerical elite that is isolating and repressing its people. The regime in that country sponsors terrorists in the Palestinian territories and in Lebanon -- and that must come to an end. The Iranian government is defying the world with its nuclear ambitions, and the nations of the world must not permit the Iranian regime to gain nuclear weapons. America will continue to rally the world to confront these threats. Tonight, let me speak directly to the citizens of Iran: America respects you, and we respect your country. We respect your right to choose your own future and win your own freedom. And our nation hopes one day to be the closest of friends with a free and democratic Iran.¹⁴⁷

Although the Bush Administration has repeatedly denied them, media reports of plans for a military strike or even invasion by the United States or a coalition against Iran

¹⁴⁶ "Security Council Tightens Restrictions on Iran's Proliferation-Sensitive Nuclear Activities, Increases Vigilance over Iranian Banks, Has States Inspect Cargo: Adopting Resolution 1803 by 14-0-1, Council Welcomes Agreement between Iran, Atomic Energy Agency to Resolve Outstanding Issues on Iran's Nuclear Programme." United Nations Security Council Department of Public Information, (March 3, 2008) <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9268.doc.htm> (accessed March 12, 2008).

¹⁴⁷ George W. Bush. "State of the Union Address by the President," Washington, DC: The White House, (January 31, 2006) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2006/> (accessed February 20, 2008).

abound.¹⁴⁸ The United States remains committed to a policy of regime change for Iran, and has passed sanctions attempting to stop trade with Iran, such as the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA, originally called the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, or ILSA), which penalizes foreign or domestic companies that invest more than \$20 million per year in Iranian energy. Although Indian companies have not yet been punished for energy deals with Iran, if the IPI pipeline went through the \$7 billion deal would certainly cross that threshold and might test the United States' resolve to sanction countries that do business with Iran.

D. THE U.S.-INDIA CIVILIAN NUCLEAR DEAL

In March 2006 U.S. President George W. Bush visited New Delhi to meet with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and formally sign the U.S.-India civilian nuclear agreement. The agreement was the first major step in a growing strategic partnership between the United States and India, which was first announced by Bush and Singh in 2005. The deal had to be approved by both the U.S. Congress and the Indian Parliament, and then India had to apply to the 45-country Nuclear Suppliers Group for approval. The deal would also have required a modification to Section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act, leading some to term the agreement the "123" deal. The deal would require India to separate its civilian and military nuclear programs and in return the United States would provide nuclear power technology and fuel, and essentially make India a de facto responsible member of the international nuclear community. One consequence of the deal and the improving relations was that India voted in the IAEA Board of Governors meeting with the United States and against Iran, with many critics in India alleging that India's vote had been purchased or coerced, and decrying the new closer relations with the United States.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, "US 'Iran Attack Plans' Revealed," BBC, (February 20, 2007) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/6376639.stm> (accessed February 20, 2008); or Alan G. Jamieson. "US May Attack, but will Iran Fight Back?" *Asia Times*, (September 12, 2007) http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/II12Ak02.html (accessed February 20, 2008).

1. The India Lobby

On July 27, 2006, the nuclear agreement passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 359-68, partly due to the dedicated work of the so-called “India lobby” working to lobby the United States Congress.¹⁴⁹ The India lobby was intentionally modeled after the very effective Israel lobby, and included political action committees such as USINPAC; lobbyists hired directly by the Indian Foreign Office, including two firms with a strong Republican background, Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer and Field, and Barbour, Griffith, and Rodgers, a firm that includes former ambassador to India Robert Blackwell, as well as Birch Bayh, the father of Democratic Senator Evan Bayh; and corporate lobbying, by groups such as the U.S.-India Business Council.¹⁵⁰ The lobbying worked, as the resulting deal had almost everything India wanted. In fact, many in the U.S. Congress, especially the nonproliferation experts, felt the deal was too heavily weighted toward Indian concerns and ultimately was not a good deal for the United States. Representative Ed Markey of Massachusetts, one of the main opponents of the nuclear deal, stated that,

After an initial review, I am more concerned than ever that this agreement is outside the bounds that Congress set in law last year. Conceding to India reprocessing rights for US-origin material, agreeing to the creation of a strategic fuel reserve which would render toothless any termination of trade if India breaks the agreement, and refusing to explicitly bar Indian nuclear explosive testing are all inconsistent with the law and the intent of Congress. The burden of proof that the Administration must bear to demonstrate the legality of this agreement is massive, perhaps impossibly so.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ See the report on legislative action for H.R. 5682 “To exempt from certain requirements of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 a proposed nuclear agreement for cooperation with India.” Available online at www.thomas.gov (accessed February 10, 2008).

¹⁵⁰ Ramtanu Maitra. “India’s Lobby on Capitol Hill,” *Asia Times*, (May 8, 2003) <http://www.indiaresource.org/issues/globalization/2003/indiaslobby.html> (accessed February 21, 2008); Michael Forsythe and Veena Trehan. “Friends in High Places Help India,” *Bloomberg News*, as published in the *International Herald Tribune*, (July 17, 2006) <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/07/17/bloomberg/sxrupee.php> (accessed February 21, 2008).

¹⁵¹ Edward Markey. “August 3, 2007 – Markey Responds to Release of U.S.-India Nuclear Cooperation Agreement: Agreement Inconsistent with Hyde Act, Previous administration Statements,” Washington, DC: Press Release, Office of Representative Markey, (August 3, 2007). http://markey.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3035&Itemid=56 (accessed February 22, 2008).

He also specifically cited India's close relationship with Iran as a reason to reject the nuclear deal.¹⁵²

Ultimately, despite all the effort by both India and the United States, the U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal looks like it may fall through due to political concerns. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Congress Party enjoys only a minority in the Indian Parliament, and rules with the help of a center-left coalition known as the United Progressive Alliance. The Indian communist parties, together with a few old bulls committed to the principles of non-alignment, a group together known as the Left Front, had enough of a disagreement with strengthening ties with the United States—as well as over whether India retained the right to conduct additional nuclear tests and whether it could reprocess spent fuel, with Indian critics arguing that these bans would be an affront to Indian sovereignty—that they threatened to force a no-confidence vote, likely resulting in a dissolution of the Indian government and forcing elections more than a year early, in 2007. Faced with this prospect Singh refused to spend additional political capital and did not submit the deal to the Nuclear Suppliers Group for review, effectively stalling progress on the deal for at least the time being.¹⁵³ In November 2007 the Left Front agreed to allow the Singh government to negotiate with the IAEA to discuss safeguards, but any deal would still need approval from the Left Front. The government has met with the IAEA four times so far.¹⁵⁴ Singh is still facing difficult electoral math, and will probably not submit a controversial deal before he is required to call elections in late 2008 or early 2009.

¹⁵² Edward Markey. "November 14, 2006 – Non-Partisan Congressional Report Reveals India's Support for Iran's Nuclear Program," Press Release, Office of Representative Markey, (November 14, 2006) http://markey.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2386&Itemid=56 (accessed February 22, 2008).

¹⁵³ "Left Announces Statewide Protest Against Nuclear Deal," *The Hindu*, (September 4, 2007) <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2007/09/04/stories/2007090460330400.htm> (accessed February 21, 2008); "US can't Hustle Indian into Taking Decision on N-Deal: CPI," *The Indian Express*, (February 11, 2008) <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/271595.html> (accessed February 21, 2008).

¹⁵⁴ Paul K. Kerr. "U.S. Nuclear Cooperation with India: Issues for Congress." Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, (February 12, 2008): 23.

2. India and the IAEA Board of Governors' Iran Votes

At the September 24, 2005, and February 4, 2006, meetings of the IAEA Board of Governors, India voted with the majority of the Board that Iran was in non-compliance with Iran's NPT Safeguard agreement and to refer the report to the UN Security Council. This was a surprise to many observers given that India had previously abstained from votes criticizing Iran in deference to their longtime friendship and 2003 strategic partnership.¹⁵⁵ Speculation ran rampant that the votes were coerced or bought by the United States through promises of the civilian nuclear deal and other closer ties. Some policymakers in India denied this connection, stating that,

India's vote against Iran in the IAEA, despite having an option to abstain, has been perceived as departing from its historical diplomatic and geo-political posture, although this move was the outcome of sheer cost-benefit analysis. The benefits of the forthcoming Indo-US nuclear deal, though important, were not the only motivation behind this decision. It has become pertinent for India to take sides and diversify its strategic options while engaging with the international system.¹⁵⁶

Still, little doubt remained that India was moving closer to the United States, and whether the IAEA votes were bought in a tit-for-tat deal or were just sending a message that the United States could count on India as an ally was largely irrelevant. The nuclear deal, or at least the promise of the deal, had moved India into the United States' camp, at least temporarily.

Now, with the collapse or at least postponement of the nuclear deal, the status of U.S.-India relations also comes into question. No resolutions on Iran have come up at the UN Board of Governors since October 2006, so it remains to be seen what role Indian domestic politics will play in potential future votes regarding Iran in the IAEA or UN Security Council (if India succeeds in gaining permanent membership). If the Indian

¹⁵⁵ Steven R. Weisman, "India Balks at Confronting Iran, Straining Its Friendship with U.S.," *New York Times*, (September 15, 2005) <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/15/international/asia/15india.html> (accessed February 21, 2008).

¹⁵⁶ Centre for Land Warfare Studies. "The US-Iran and the Indo-US Trade-Offs: Demolishing Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime." New Delhi, India: Centre for Land Warfare Studies http://landwarfareindia.org/index.php?action=details&m_id=36 (accessed February 20, 2008).

government could not or would not put itself on the line for a deal that greatly benefited India, how can the United States expect Indian support on more difficult matters, such as a potential disagreement with China?

E. CONCLUSION

India is walking a foreign policy tightrope between two important allies with whom it has signed strategic partnerships: the United States and Iran. The United States is a major trading partner, the world's only superpower and a common collaborator on security issues, and offered an important civilian nuclear technology deal that would have offered valuable energy resources and a path toward being recognized as a responsible actor in the international nuclear community. Iran is a fellow member of the non-aligned movement seeking its own security against a common adversary in Pakistan, and offering valuable energy resources that India desperately needs to keep its economy growing.

When the United States offered a big incentive, the U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal, India changed its historic voting pattern and voted against Iran twice in the IAEA Board of Governors meetings. The Indian government engaged in an extensive lobbying campaign in Washington, DC, to ensure that it got the best deal possible, but the deal has been at least temporarily derailed due to internal Indian politics and a minority party's fear of getting closer to the United States, not the specifics of the deal itself. Relations with Iran may not have been the primary factor in the destruction of the deal, but those opposed to the deal in India did not want to become a puppet of the United States, including at the expense of India's relations with other countries such as Iran.

Although India has important interests with the United States, and in fact is probably as close to the United States as any other country, it views itself as a great power in its own right and does not wish to become a puppet or even a reliable ally of any country. Whether the United States can sweeten any deals enough to win over India on any future votes over Iran remains to be seen. India has clearly demonstrated that it wants to be seen as an important power acting based on its own interests, and not as too close or beholden to any other country.

VI. CONCLUSION: WORKING WITH A NEW POWER: A MIXED CONCEPT

There is no condition that deserves permanently the name either of friendship or hostility. Both friends and foes arise from considerations of interest and gain. Friendship could turn into enmity in the course of time. A foe also becomes a friend. It is the force of circumstances that creates friends and foes.

--Bhishma, the Mahabharata, 4th century C.E.¹⁵⁷

Of the powerful states which are on friendly terms, a state should form collaboration with one which is nearest to it in identities of interests and perspectives.

--Kautilya, the Arthashastra, 3rd century B.C.E.¹⁵⁸

A. INTRODUCTION

Many academics and policymakers assume that India is a rising power in the world and a natural ally of the United States. They are half right. India is currently one of the major powers in Asia and is actively working to become a great power in the world. But despite having natural sympathies in part due to being democratic countries that have experienced terrorist attacks and have close trade ties, the United States and India are not natural allies, and their relationship will continue to be based on shared interests more than anything else.

India has a long and rich history of a realist foreign policy, making decisions and acting based on power and interest calculations. It also views its natural area of interest as

¹⁵⁷ The Mahabharata is one of the great Sanskrit epics. A translation is at <http://www.mahabharataonline.com/> (accessed February 26, 2008).

¹⁵⁸ Kautilya, *Arthashastra, Book III: Inter-State Policy and Administration*, Chapter 42, Essence of Collaboration. Quoted in T.T. Ramaswamy, *Essentials of Indian Statecraft: Kautilya's Arthashastra for Contemporary Readers*. New York, NY: Asia Publishing House (1962): 112.

far larger than simply its territorial boundaries. In recent years India has begun a transformation of its foreign policy with the goal of achieving influence across the region and ultimately rising as one of the world's great powers.

This chapter will explore India's realist foreign policy traditions and great power ambition. It will summarize the case studies of India's expanded foreign policy in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Iran, and describe likely next steps in the foreign policy transformation. Finally the chapter will offer policy conclusions and recommendations for U.S. policymakers regarding U.S.-India relations for the future.

B. INDIA'S REALIST TRADITION

India has one of the world's oldest traditions of a realist foreign policy (or at least some of the oldest writings about a realist foreign policy), dating back to the author Kautilya, the Chief Minister to king Chandragupta, who ruled during the Maurya Empire, around 317-293 B.C.E. Kautilya's classic realist text, the *Arthashastra* (roughly translated as the "science of politics"), is only slightly more recent than Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Kautilya's writings are famous for their ruthless nature and advice based on pure power considerations. He advocated the use of violence, assassination of foreign leaders, killing domestic opponents, using an enemy's personal flaws against him, the use of secret agents, and violating treaties.¹⁵⁹

Kautilya's most famous formulation is the "mandala" theory, a way of describing concentric rings around a state and designating a series of temporarily assigned enemies and allies.¹⁶⁰ Roger Boesche describes mandala theory as one,

... in which one considers one's immediate neighbors as one's enemies, but regards any state on the other side of a neighboring state as an ally; put bluntly, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Imagine a series of states to one's west, and then number them starting with oneself; states numbered

¹⁵⁹ One of the best discussions of Kautilya is, Roger Boesche. *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra*. New York, NY: Lexington Books (2002).

¹⁶⁰ See, Risita Dellios, "Mandala: From Sacred Origins to Sovereign Affairs in Traditional Southeast Asia," Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies, Research Paper No. 10 (2003).

1, 3, 5, 7, and so on will likely be friends, whereas states 2, 4, 6, 8, and so on will probably be one's enemies.¹⁶¹

At least the basic tenets of mandala theory are still evident in Indian foreign policy, as India has historically counted Pakistan as an enemy and Afghanistan, Iran, and Tajikistan (all the next country beyond Pakistan) as allies.

Indian scholar Manjeet Singh Pardesi has attempted to deduce India's current grand strategy (something that has not been produced, unlike the various U.S. National Security Strategies) and strategic culture through an understanding of the history of four pan-Indian empires: "the Mauryas (321 B.C. – 185 B.C.), the Guptas (321 A.D. – 500 A.D.), the Mughals (1526 A.D. – 1720 A. D.) and the Republic of India (1947 A.D. – present)."¹⁶² He concludes that India's grand strategic paradigm includes:

(1) a realist drive towards power maximisation due to structural reasons, including the use of force when necessary, under the veneer of morality; (2) Strategic autonomy in its security affairs and strategic unity of South Asia through an attempt to establish regional hegemony in the subcontinent; (3) Warfare as a part of statecraft as opposed to the exclusive realm of the military, and with a tendency to dominate, assimilate or accommodate opponents, as opposed to decisively destroying them; (4) A defensive strategic orientation against extra-regional powers and with a strategic orientation of 'offensive defense' in the subcontinent; and (5) A remarkable ability to gradually adapt to changing political and military trends while remaining consistent in the four strategic trends mentioned above.¹⁶³

(As a side note, the defensive aspect of Indian grand strategy may be changing, as the Indian army develops its Cold Start doctrine aimed at being able to quickly and aggressively strike against Pakistani-backed militants operating in the Kashmir

¹⁶¹ Roger Boesche, *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra*. New York: Lexington Books (2002). 78.

¹⁶² Majeet Singh Pardesi. "Deducing India's Grand Strategy of Regional Hegemony from historical and Conceptual Perspectives." Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore, Working Paper No. 76 (April 2005). 10.

¹⁶³ Ibid, ii.

region.)¹⁶⁴ Pardesi concludes that Indian grand strategy is to pursue the policy of offensive realism posited by John Mearsheimer and attempt to become a regional hegemon.¹⁶⁵ However, unlike Mearsheimer's original idea, Pardesi, as well as others such as C. Raja Mohan, believe that India does not want to territorially control the entire region but instead simply exert a strong level of influence over the region. Mohan argues that, "India is not seeking additional territory but what it sees as its rightful place at the top of the international order."¹⁶⁶

Balancing out India's realist tradition is the idealist rhetoric it has used to cloak its foreign policy actions since independence in 1947. As mentioned in Chapter III, Indian leaders are very proud of their tradition as the world's largest democracy, as well as the relatively peaceful interaction of the many different cultures and religions present in India and the nonviolent leadership of Mohandas Gandhi, and promote those traditions to enhance India's soft power. Although the rhetoric has promoted India's idealist values, Indian actions have primarily been based on the rules of realism. Stephen Cohen notes that,

Perhaps the breakthrough came during the CTBT debate, when India's representative, Ambassador Arundati Ghosh, stated that India had to oppose the treaty (as then written) because security issues were involved... hitherto, Indian positions on such treaties were stated in terms of high principle, although they may have been guided by considerations of realpolitik.¹⁶⁷

C. INDIA'S GREAT POWER AMBITIONS

India probably does not want to conquer or acquire additional territory in the old sense of empire, particularly since the subcontinent is geographically isolated, and given

¹⁶⁴ For more information on the Indian Army's Cold Start doctrine see, Walter C. Ladwig III. "A Cold Start for Hot Wars?: the Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine." *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Winter 2007/8): 158-190.

¹⁶⁵ See John J. Mearsheimer. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York, NY: W W Norton & Company (2001).

¹⁶⁶ C. Raja Mohan, *Impossible Allies: Nuclear India, United States and the Global Order*. New Delhi: India Research Press (2006). 261.

¹⁶⁷ Stephen Philip Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press (2001). 308.

that its two main adversaries, Pakistan and China, both have nuclear weapons. Instead India's ambitions are to engage in what the Clinton Administration called a "shaping strategy" of engagement in key regions in order to ensure that they view India in a positive light and enable India's interests to be met.¹⁶⁸ Much of this engagement is driven by the need for natural resources, especially energy necessary to keep the economy humming. That need for energy has led to strong engagement in places like Central Asia, the Middle East, and, more recently, Africa. In addition to energy, these countries can serve as new markets for Indian goods and a source of cheap imports.¹⁶⁹

Perhaps equally important to Indian leaders is international recognition that India is a great power. India was a leader of the non-aligned movement under Jawaharlal Nehru both for the principles it represented but also so that it could be recognized as a leader of a powerful movement. At the April 2007 conference on the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership,

Several Indian presenters stated that the international power disposition is now hexagonal (the United States, Russia, China, India, Japan, and the European Union as a whole rather than independent countries). The old institutions, including the Security Council and the Bretton Woods economic arrangements, probably will need to be revised to accommodate the needs and preferences of new powers.¹⁷⁰

India wants to be recognized as one of the major powers in the world, including having expressed a desire for a permanent seat on the Security Council—with veto power, a move it hopes the United States would support, which is already supported by permanent members Great Britain, France, and Russia, as well as by fellow developing countries

¹⁶⁸ For a discussion of shaping strategies see, Stephen J. Blank, William T. Johnsen, and Thomas-Durell Young, "European Security: Washington's Shaping Strategy in Action," Strategic Studies Institute of the Army War College, Monograph (March 1, 2000) <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB138.pdf> (accessed February 25, 2008).

¹⁶⁹ See, Harry G. Broadman. "China and India go to Africa: New Deals in the Developing World," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87 No. 2 (March/April 2008): 95-109.

¹⁷⁰ Peter R. Lavoy and Robin Walker. "Conference Report: U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue for Long-Term Cooperation," Center for Contemporary Conflict, (April 25-26, 2007) <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jun/lavoy2Jun07.asp> (accessed February 25, 2008).

such as Egypt, Brazil, and South Africa, as well as Germany and Japan.¹⁷¹ New news reports indicate that China may support India's bid as well, leaving only the United States among the five permanent members opposing India's bid.¹⁷²

When discussing nuclear issues one Indian participant at the April 2007 conference stated that India's 1998 nuclear tests were both the low point—since the United States imposed sanctions against India after the tests—and the beginning of the high point—since becoming a nuclear power forced the United States and the rest of the world to take India seriously as a major power in the world—for U.S.-India relations.¹⁷³ A non-signer of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), India first tested a nuclear device in 1974 and has been a nuclear outcast ever since. The proposed U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal would have essentially declared India to be a de facto responsible nuclear power, an outcome India greatly desired as a step toward recognizing it as a major power in the world.

D. CASE STUDIES: INDIA'S STRATEGIES FOR EXPANDED INFLUENCE

India's historically defensive foreign policy has been transformed as its economy liberalized and bloomed since the late 1980s. Now India's expanded foreign policy is outward looking, driven to interact with and influence countries surrounding the Indian Ocean and beyond in an attempt to find new markets and resources to keep it on its path to great power status. That need for security, influence, and resources has led to engagement using a variety of different tools in areas as diverse as Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Iran.

India is seeking increased influence in Southeast Asia, something made more difficult since both China and the United States are also actively working to expand their influence into the region. All three countries are using the tools of what Joseph Nye termed "soft power," although each is using it slightly differently. The United States

¹⁷¹ Ethirajan Anbarasa., "Analysis: India's Security Council Seat Bid," BBC News (September 22, 2004) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3679968.stm> (accessed February 25, 2008).

¹⁷² "China Supports India's Bid to United Nations Security Council Permanent Seat," *India Defence*, (January 14, 2008) <http://www.india-defence.com/reports/3695> (accessed February 25, 2008).

¹⁷³ Lavoy and Walker, "U.S.-India Strategic Partnership." (April 2007).

allows its cultural and business influences to evolve and influence the region naturally, with little if any government-driven effort to increase the United States' image and the probability that a given country would want to cooperate or collaborate with U.S. efforts or interests. The Chinese government, on the other hand, has engaged in what Joshua Kurlantzick describes as a "charm offensive" across Southeast Asia, Africa, South America, and elsewhere in order to curry favor with local leaders and populations and increase its influence. Indian leaders are very proud of what they view as their soft power advantages, including being the world's largest democracy, having a relatively peaceful tradition of different religions and cultures co-existing, serving as a leader and advocate in Asia and to the Third World in general as a leader of the non-aligned movement, and having a booming economy. Indian policymakers seem to desire the efficiency of the Chinese effort at expanding its foreign policy, but so far India has not developed the organization necessary for that kind of endeavor, and has largely resorted to U.S.-style soft power driven by the private sector. Likewise, Indian policymakers do not seem to know quite how to wield India's accumulated soft power in an effective manner—although this is one of the problems dealt with by policymakers in all countries when addressing the idea of soft power.

In Central Asia, Indian policymakers are similarly confused with how to make effective policy in order to accomplish their goals, although the techniques and tools used fall on the traditional hard power—military and economic tools—side of the axis. India is clear about what it wants—access to the important energy resources in the region, minimizing threats from extremist groups in the area, and a foothold in the strategic crossroads that would allow them to threaten Pakistan or other countries—but is unclear about how to make real progress in those directions. It has developed its first military base outside of its borders with the airbase at Ayni, Tajikistan, making it a player in the area and allowing it to threaten Pakistan, but that is counterproductive when the most viable routes for getting energy to India involve passing through Pakistan. Unlike in Southeast Asia, India's interests regarding Central Asia are largely compatible with those of the United States, especially in encouraging stability, reducing terrorism, and curbing

influence by China and Russia, because the two countries are not competing for resources, although soft power techniques are not generally zero-sum game in nature.

India is also walking a tightrope between the United States and Iran. It wants recognition as a nuclear power, support for a permanent seat on the Security Council, and major trade and military sales deals from the United States, and in return one thing the United States is asking for is support in isolating Iran in punishment for Iran's nuclear weapons program. However, India also feels a connection to Iran as a country ostracized and isolated by the international community for asserting itself, and additionally wants to negotiate deals for Iranian energy. It voted first with Iran and then twice against it at the IAEA Board of Governors, with the latter votes at least influenced by the desire for closer ties—with tangible results—to the United States. P.R. Kumaraswamy stated that, "The IAEA votes exhibit the influence of hardened realism on India's Iran policy. But the public posturing of India's policy is shaped by domestic political calculations."¹⁷⁴ But staying on the knife-edge between these two countries has been difficult for India, and has contributed to the lack of progress on issues of great importance to India regarding both Iran and the United States.

The overall picture of India is of a country with the desire and tools to become a great power in Asia and the world, held back by the bureaucracy and lack of strategic thinking by India's foreign policymakers. As a modern state India is a young tiger with teeth and claws, but does not know quite how to use them yet. India has fairly clearly defined goals and interests, but is unable to implement or achieve them, whether those goals are wielding substantial soft power resources in Southeast Asia, moving decisively into Central Asia, or finding a way to work around the difficulties holding up a valuable natural gas pipeline from Iran. One of India's core beliefs is that India is a great power in its own right, and should be treated by the world as such.

¹⁷⁴ PR Kumaraswamy. "India's Nuke Dance Over Iran," *Strategic Insights*, Volume VI, Issue 5 (August 2007) <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Aug/kumaraswamyAug07.asp> (accessed March 4, 2008).

E. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the United States and India may not be “natural allies,” as Prime Minister Vajpayee called them in 2000, the two countries still have many important interests that would be served by a close relationship and working together.¹⁷⁵ These policy recommendations—for both U.S. and Indian policymakers—are intended to ensure that India’s quest to become a great power is as compatible with U.S. interests and goals as possible.

1. Recommendations for U.S. Policymakers

- **Partnership, not alliance:** U.S. policymakers should treat India with a great deal of respect as a fellow great power, not a weaker partner in an alliance of convenience. If the United States treats India as a second-class citizen it is likely to be unpleasantly surprised by India’s lack of support in potentially contentious situations.
- **Ask, and compromise:** The United States should not assume that India is a reliable partner. India has established formal strategic partnerships with many other countries, with varying degrees of meaning. Each new agreement, request, or action should be dealt with individually, with attention paid to Indian needs and interests. U.S. and Indian interests and values are frequently aligned, but the two countries often have different preferred methods of accomplishing their goals. Compromise and offer incentives in order to gain cooperation.
- **Continue the dialogue to build habits of cooperation:** India was close to the Soviet Union for so long that it is still adjusting to dealing with a new partner. The United States and India are not used to doing business with each other, despite the numerous books for Americans on how to conduct business relations within India. The two countries need to develop a better understanding for the other’s strategic culture. The longer they work together and the more they discuss issues the better they will understand one another. As a corollary of this, even if

¹⁷⁵ Malini Parthasarathy, “India, U.S. Natural Allies: Vajpayee,” *The Hindu*, (September 9, 2000).

talks on a certain subject prove to be less than fully fruitful, the mere act of discussion is itself a form of progress. One Indian discussant at the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership dialogue stated that, “After 123 [the nuclear agreement] comes 126 [the sale of 126 aircraft to the Indian air force].”¹⁷⁶ Although the civilian nuclear deal is stalled for now due to Indian domestic politics, progress is being made on other areas, such as defense cooperation. India is still very interested in purchasing the 126 aircraft, and U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates’ February 2008 visit to New Delhi was fruitful, including talk of possible cooperation on missile defense.¹⁷⁷

2. Recommendations for Indian Policymakers

- **Try to respond to U.S. bureaucratic momentum:** The United States has many international priorities, and can quickly get distracted from any given one. However, when U.S. policymakers are focused on one country many different departments and agencies can be ready to move quickly, a fire hose of political, economic, and military momentum that Indian (and other) bureaucracies can find difficult to handle.¹⁷⁸ Indian policymakers should attempt to reorganize the bureaucracy to prepare itself, so that when India is in the United States’ bureaucratic spotlight the two countries can move quickly to strike while the iron is hot and make progress quickly.
- **Articulate a grand strategy:** Numerous authors have pointed out India’s relative lack of strategic direction.¹⁷⁹ Gurmeet Kanwal compares India to Alice in

¹⁷⁶ Lavoy and Walker, “U.S.-India Strategic Partnership.” (April 2007).

¹⁷⁷ Mark Mazzetti and Somini Sengupta, “U.S. and India to Strengthen Security Ties,” *New York Times* (February 28, 2008). <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/28/world/asia/28gates.html?ref=asia>. (accessed February 29, 2008).

¹⁷⁸ This theme was brought out at the September 2007 U.S.-India Maritime Cooperation conference in New Delhi. Peter Lavoy and Robin Walker, “Conference Report: U.S.-India Maritime Cooperation: A Track-Two Dialogue.” Center for Contemporary Conflict, (September 18, 2007). http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/events/recent/US-IndiaMaritimeCooperation07_rpt.asp (accessed February 27, 2008).

¹⁷⁹ See, Ashley J. Tellis. *India’s Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal*. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, (2001).

Wonderland, not knowing what direction to turn because it doesn't know where it wants to go in an era of strategic uncertainty.¹⁸⁰ India should begin a process of drawing up such a national security strategy. The end result could be public or classified, but India will not know what goals it will not be able to achieve if its only goal is to become a great power without defining what that means or outlining a plan for how to get there. The task force headed by K. Subrahmanyam on global strategic developments may be an important step in the right direction, as he is one of India's most important strategic thinkers.¹⁸¹ Publishing at least a summary of that strategy would help other countries, such as the United States, to move in appropriate directions.

3. Recommendations Regarding Soft Power

India and the United States have so far failed to adapt to the broader definition of soft power, as espoused by Joshua Kurlantzick and practiced by China. Both countries take pride in their reputations as democratic nations with wide-reaching cultural influences, histories of diplomatic leadership, and booming economies. However, their soft power resources derive primarily from actions taken by the private sector and from cultural ties. Neither India nor the United States has a government-led approach to promoting itself, building cultural ties, or actively increasing its soft power. Chinese efforts to build soft power have placed additional focus on government-financed cultural and educational exchanges, and have built infrastructure, such as roads and port facilities, abroad, particularly in Southeast Asia and Africa.

The United States and India are also still learning how to build and wield soft power. China's builds and utilizes its soft power resources to improve its relationship with key countries efficiently and effectively. India lacks the grand strategy it needs for a government-led effort to build and wield soft power, while the Bush Administration's

¹⁸⁰ Gurmeet Kanwal, "India's National Security Strategy in a Nuclear Environment," *Strategic Analysis*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, Vol. XXIV No. 9 (December 2000).

¹⁸¹ "Task Force Constituted," *The Hindu* (November 5, 2005).
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strategy eschews the very nature of soft power. Both countries should transform their strategic thinking and planning to enhance and take advantage of their soft power.

F. CONCLUSION

India is one of the key rising powers in the world, and likely will exert enormous leverage throughout the 21st century. It wants to be respected as a great power both in the region and the world, and has all the tools and potential to become one, but currently those tools are not in sync, leaving India poised on the edge of greatness. The United States shares many interests and values with India, and can benefit a great deal from its strategic partnership with this rising power. The two countries appear to be strategically aligned at the moment, but situations may arise in the future, such as another Indian crisis with Pakistan or the quest for oil, that will drive the two countries apart. Policymakers on both sides should work quickly to make as much progress as possible while their strategic interests are relatively aligned. The United States must respect India's sovereignty and independence and not make the mistake of treating India as a secondary partner or pawn.

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